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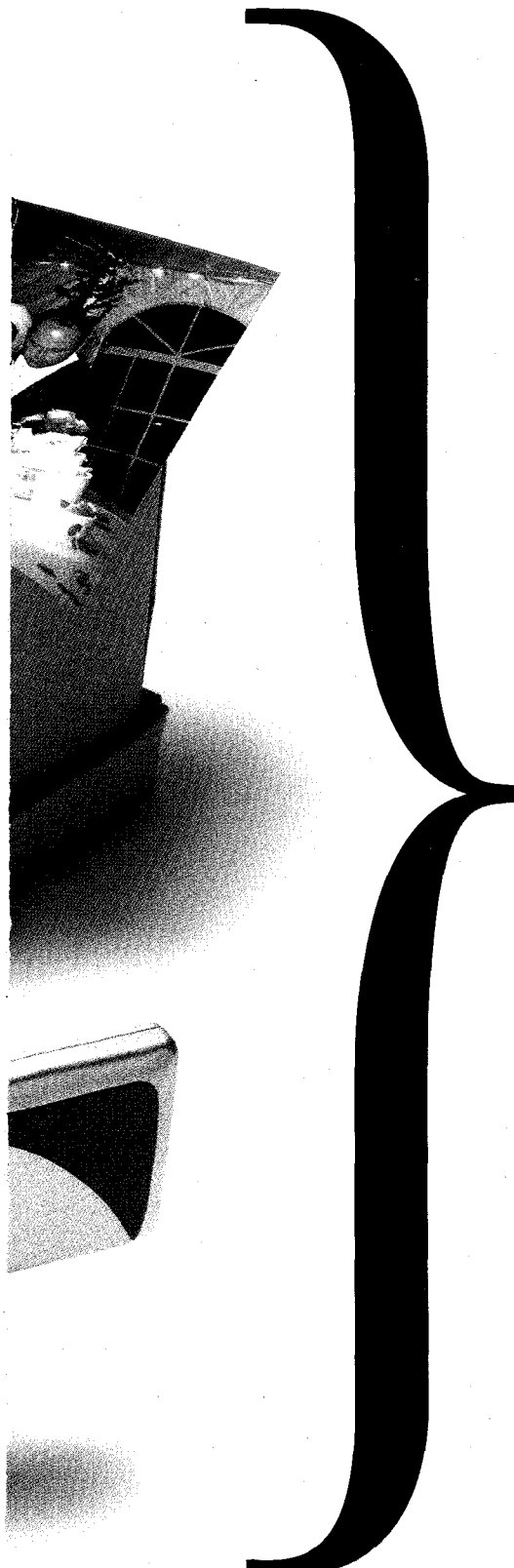


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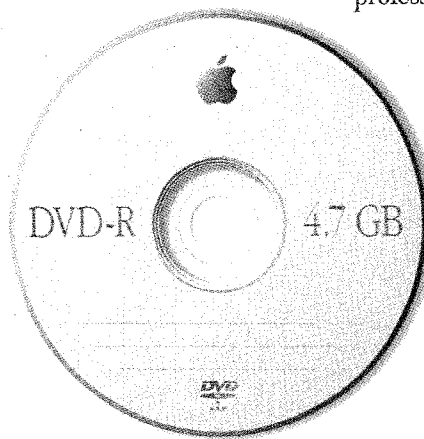
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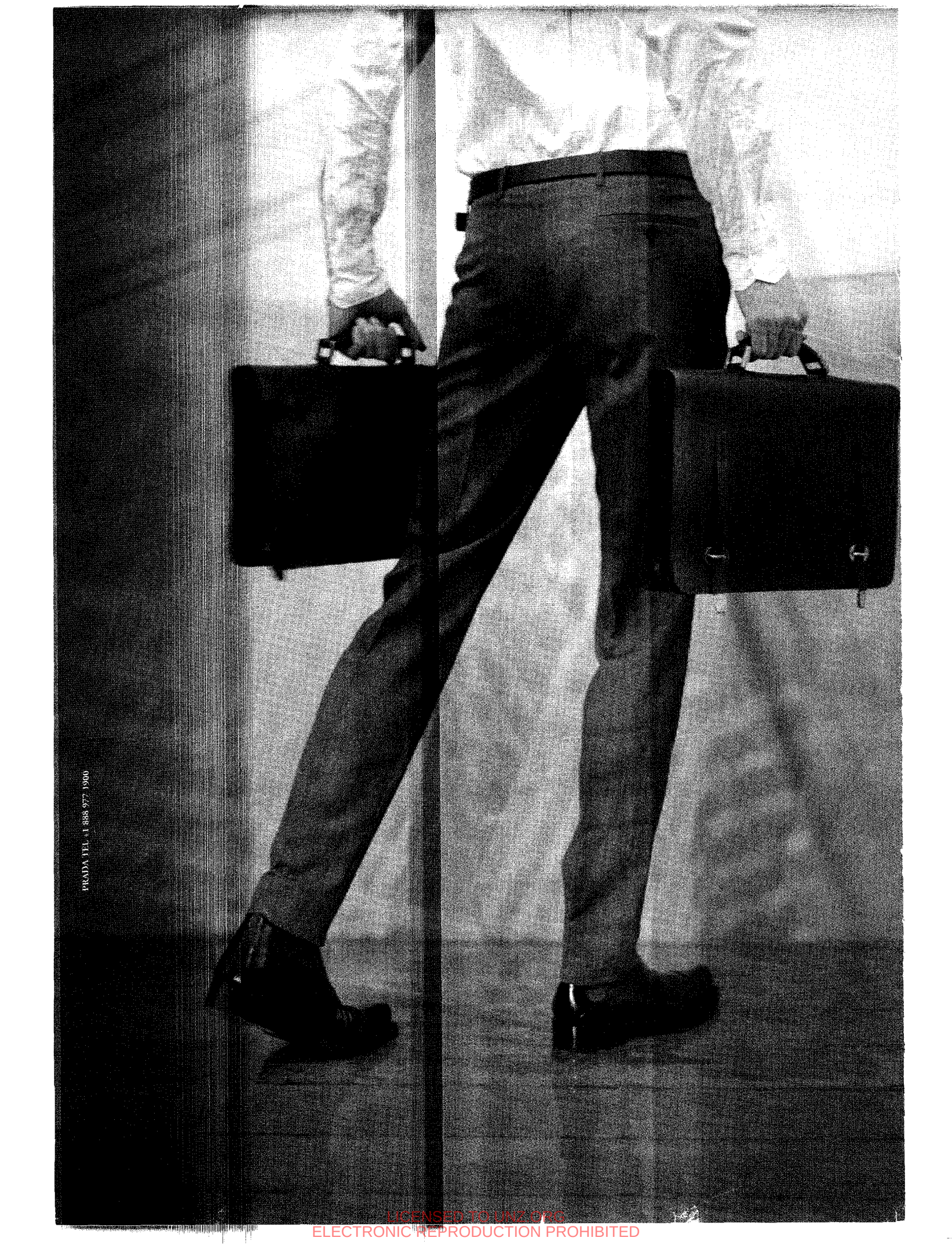
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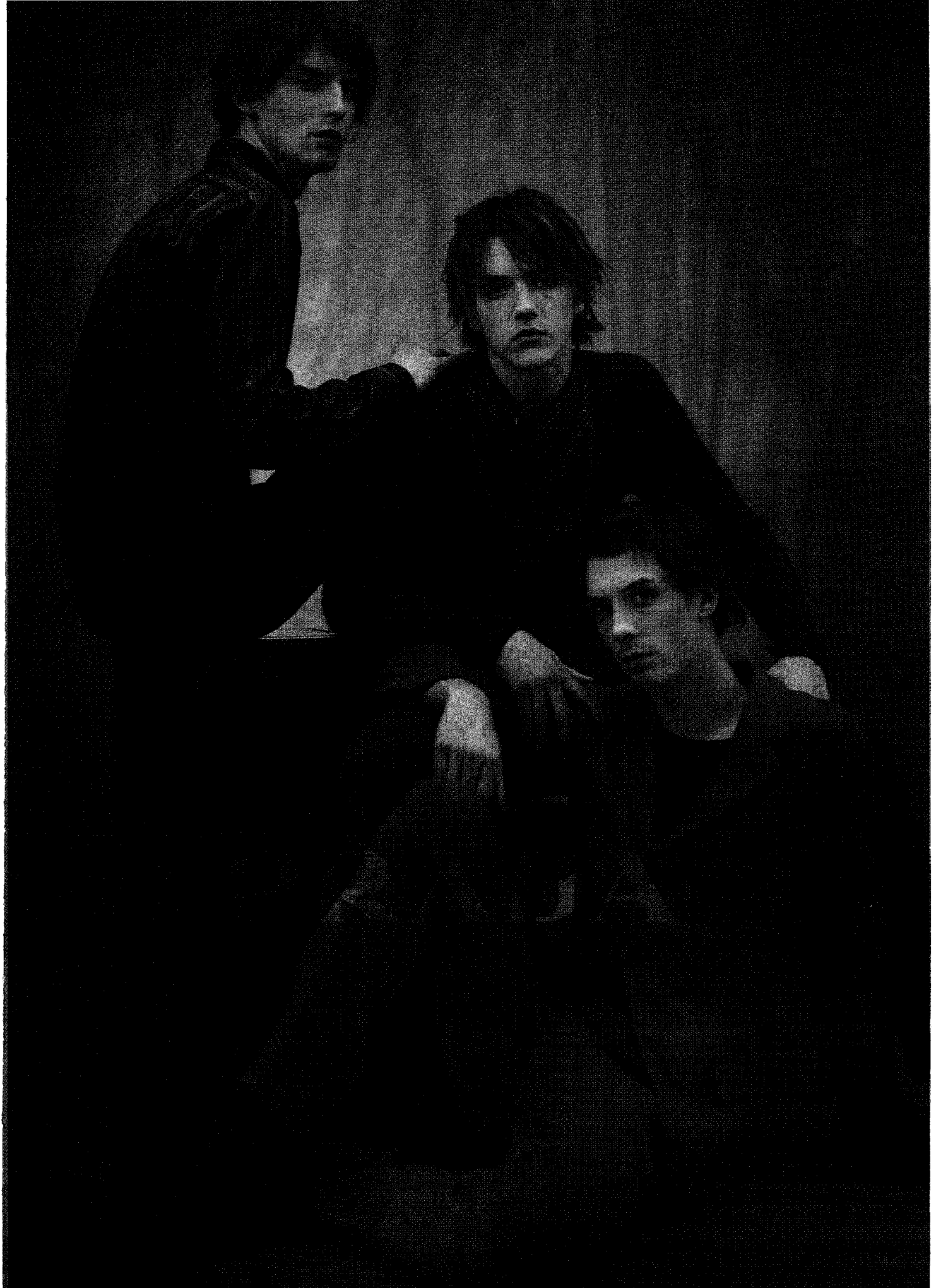
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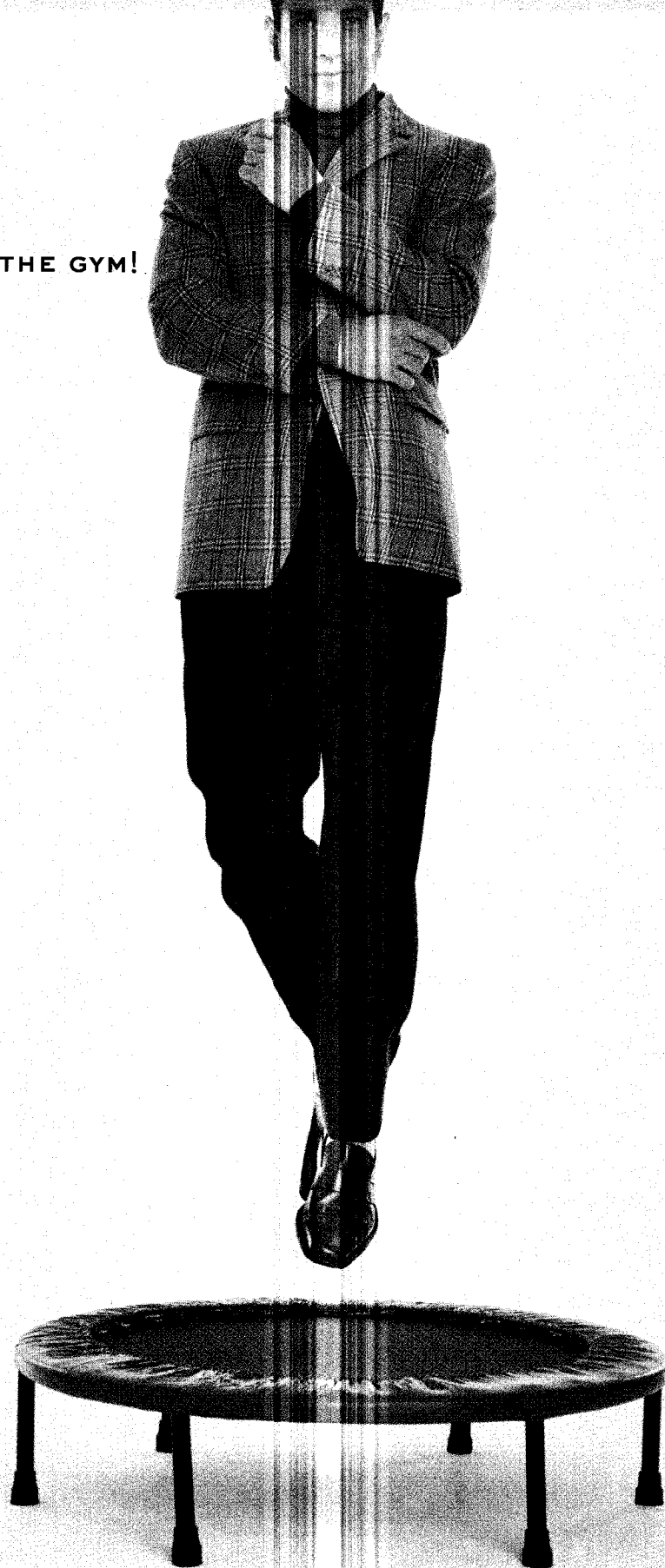




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THE NEW YORKER THE MUSIC ISSUE

AUGUST 20 & 27, 2001

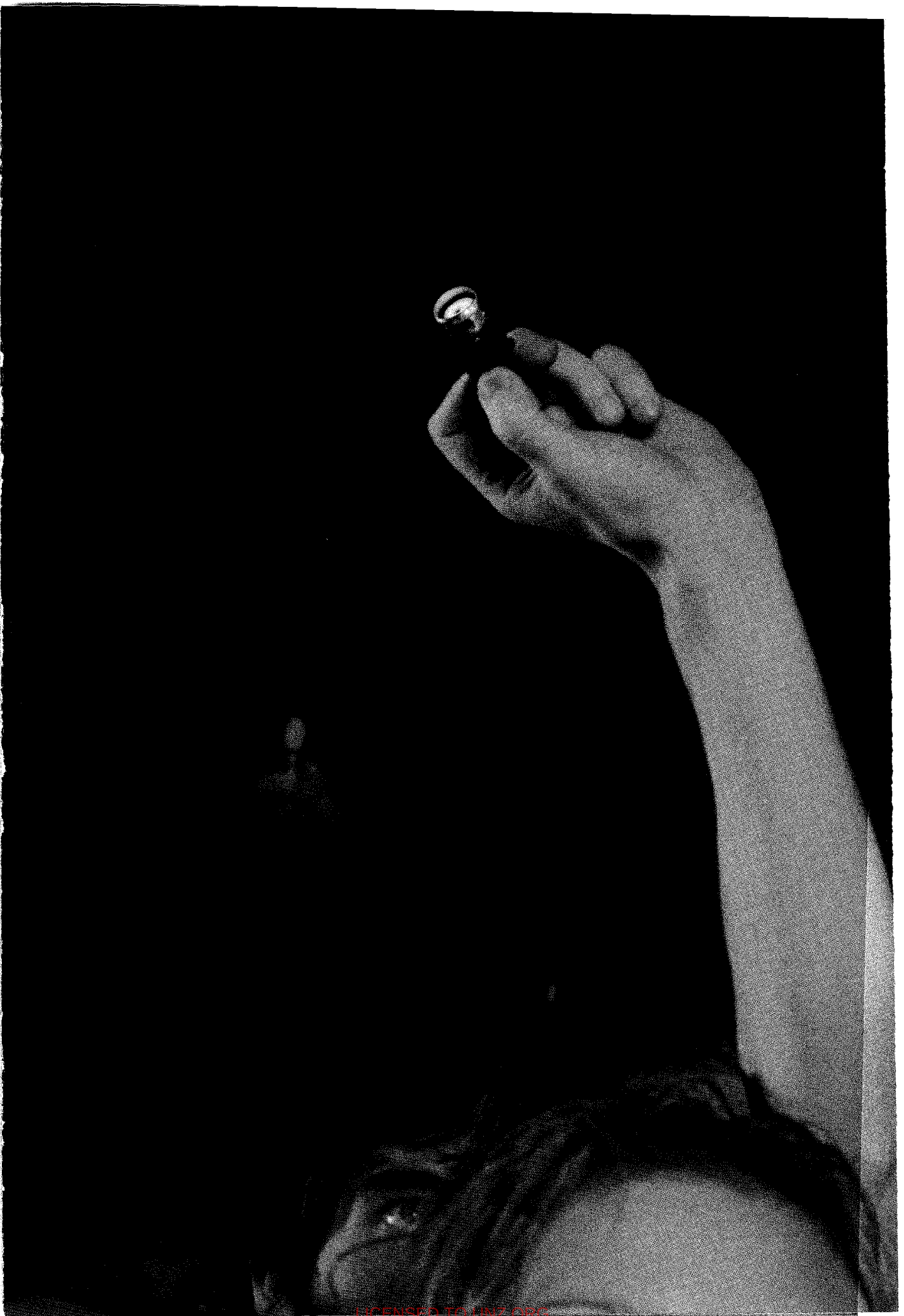
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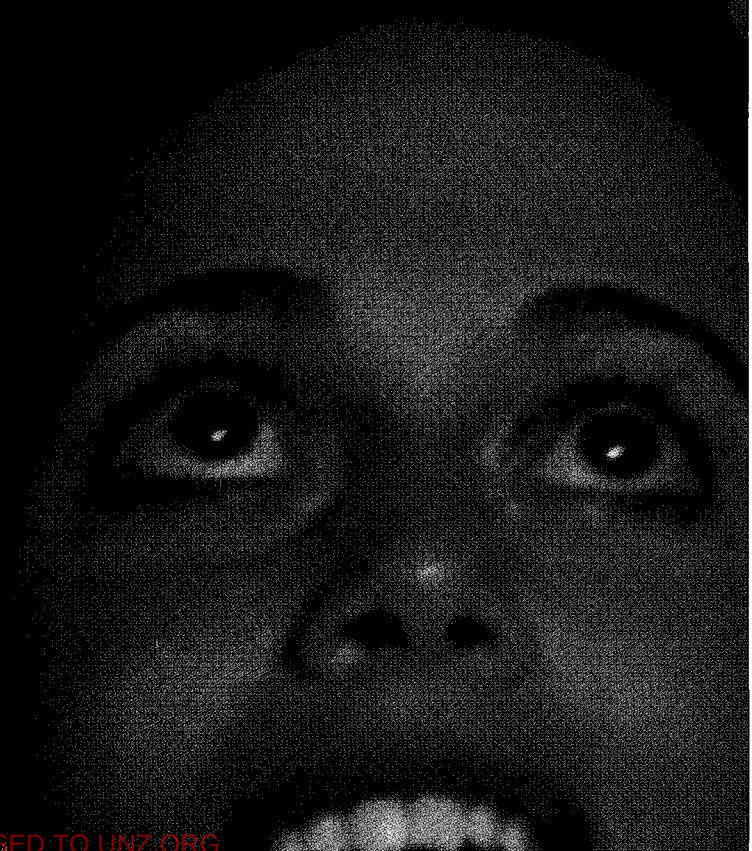
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Hilton Als ("True Stories," p. 99) has been a staff writer since 1996.

Alex Ross ("The Searchers," p. 112), the magazine's music critic, is working on a book about twentieth-century music.

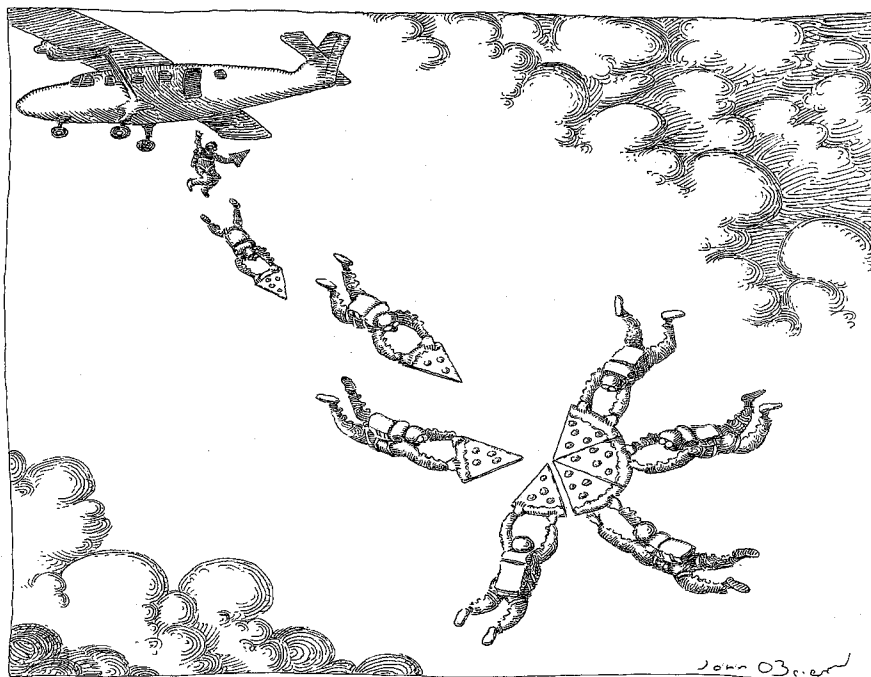
Jane Kramer ("Opera Wars," p. 138) writes the Letter from Europe for the magazine. Her new book, "Lone Patriot," will be published next year.

Haruki Murakami (Fiction, p. 146) has written seven novels, including "Norwegian Wood" and "South of the Border, West of the Sun."

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Whitney Balliett (Jazz, p. 156) is the author of "Collected Works: A Journal of Jazz, 1954-2000."

Nick Hornby (A Critic at Large, p. 166) writes about pop music for the magazine. His novel "How to Be Good" has just been published. ♦



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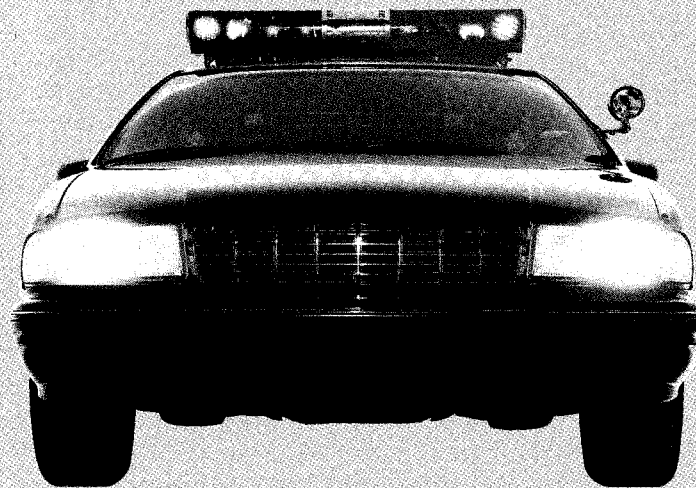
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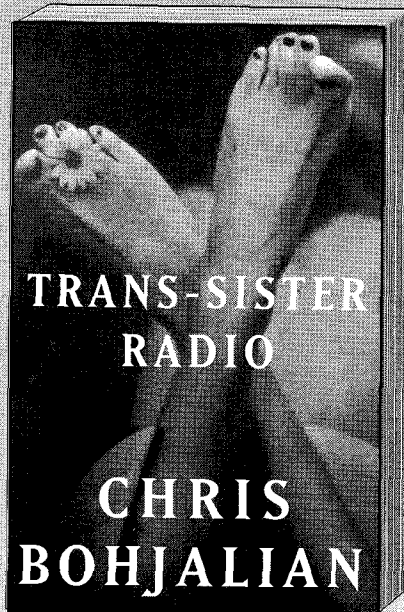


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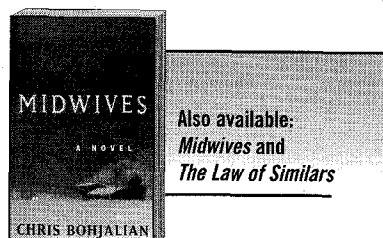


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THE MAIL

MIND AND MEMORY

Michael Specter's article on neurogenesis—the generation of new nerve cells in adult brains—outlines a conflict between theories about the brain: one, which holds that for a memory to last the original neurons storing it must endure as well; and another, that memory involves a significant and regular turnover of neurons ("Rethinking the Brain," July 23rd). Recent research, however, suggests that these positions can be reconciled. A single neuron can receive as many as a hundred thousand synaptic branches from other neurons; the trillions of synaptic junctions they collectively form house vast quantities of information within them. Mature neurons are not asked to transfer that information to descendant cells, because they don't have descendants: they do not divide and, often, do survive as long as we do. These neurons can, however, have newly formed relatives, through neurogenesis, and may be capable of transferring some information to them—although such transfer has yet to be demonstrated. We know that the strengths of signals across these myriad synaptic junctions can change with learning (as my lab has found) or with electrical stimulation. This means that new cells can, perhaps, learn to work with old neurons and their old memories. The preservation of synaptic networks, with their acquired patterns of synaptic strength, and the generation of new neurons can complement each other to help expand and renew the brain's miraculous capacity to remember.

Daniel L. Alkon
Scientific Director, Blanchette Rockefeller
Neurosciences Institute
Rockville, Md.

The neuroscientist Fernando Nottebohm's comment, which Specter quotes, that Pasko Rakic, the chairman of the neurobiology department at the Yale University School of Medicine, has, through his skepticism, single-handedly held back the field of neurogenesis for a decade is disturbing to those of us who know Rakic and the importance of his

contributions. Views that challenge current thinking, like those of Nottebohm and of Elizabeth Gould, of Princeton, must meet rigorous analysis and stand up to critical review; it is the obligation of careful, thoughtful scientists like Rakic to demand this rigor. Rakic's caution is, most likely, born of his experience with the subject. Far from holding back young scientists, Rakic has been a source of support for many of them. No better example can be found than in his hiring and promotion of women at Yale.

Michael L. Schwartz
Associate Professor of Neurobiology
Yale University School of Medicine
New Haven, Conn.

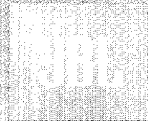
OIL ON THE CHEAP

James Surowiecki suggests that the United States "go after" OPEC for "orchestrating an international price-fixing conspiracy" (The Talk of the Town, August 6th). But OPEC was hardly the first to impose controls on oil markets. Until just before the gas shortage of 1973, Texas and other states set limits on oil production; for a time, Texas allowed wells to be pumped only a certain number of days per month. In the late nineteen-fifties, when the Saudis were trying to sell us oil for less than the Texas set price, President Eisenhower imposed import quotas, claiming it would ruin the U.S. oil industry. In any event, the rest of the world isn't convinced that the U.S. is entitled to the lowest price possible for gasoline. President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, for example, has said that cheap oil may be good for the U.S., but it is bad for his country. The oil producers in Texas feel the same way.

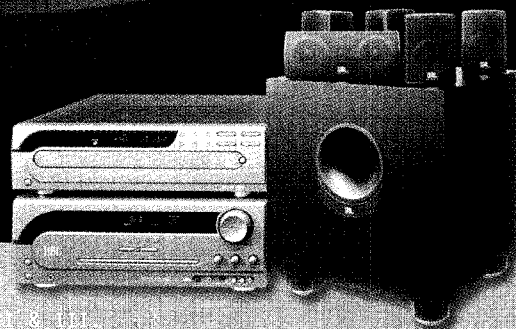
R. C. Mason
Simi Valley, Calif.

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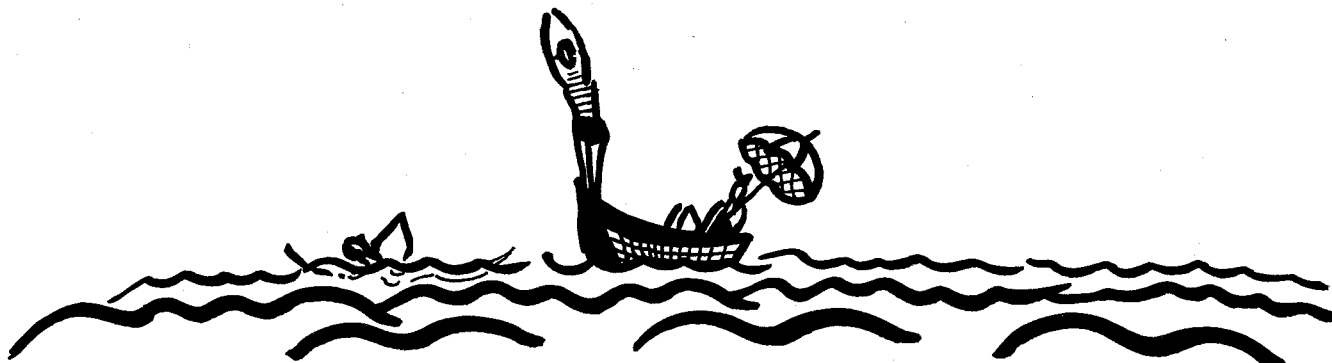
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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



THE THEATRE OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

SNATCHES

The taped conversations between Monica Lewinsky and Linda Tripp are the basis for a comedy by Laura Strausfeld. Preview on Aug. 15. Opens Aug. 16 at 8. (78th Street Theatre Lab, 236 W. 78th St. 873-9050.)

URINETOWN

Mark Hollmann and Greg Kotis's musical comedy about a city in the throes of ecological disaster, starring John Cullum, has moved to Broadway. John Rando is the director. In previews. (Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

THE AMERICAN LIVING ROOM DIRECTING CABARET

The annual summer series presents two-night-only stagings of short works directed by emerging artists. The festival continues through Sept. 2. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., at Spring St. 647-0202.)

BAT BOY: THE MUSICAL

A kind of "My Fair Bat Boy," in which a half-bat, half-man—memorably played by Deven May—emerges from his childhood cave into adult bourgeois life. But the musical world he enters is one of darkness, not light, of ironies, not idealism, where plot is a history of abdications and song extolls the emptiness of all the standard credos—Christianity, family, community, love, redemption—and of the musical form itself. It's a jejune vision, but a smart, playful, and funny one nonetheless. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/9/01.) (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

BAT THEATRE COMPANY

Presenting five plays in repertoire. Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays at 7: Lillian Mortimer's "No Mother to Guide Her." ♦ Thursdays at 7, Saturdays at 3 and 7, and Sundays at 3: Walter Woods's "Billy the Kid." ♦ Mondays at 9, Thursdays at 10, and Fridays and Saturdays at midnight: "Ajax," by Alice Tuan. ♦ Saturdays and Sundays at 1: "Cleveland," by Mac Wellman. ♦ Fridays at 10 and Mondays at 7: "Sincerity Forever," by Mr. Wellman. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-2407. Closes Sept. 10.)

BLAST!

A musical extravaganza, which evolved from the drum-and-bugle corps Star of Indiana. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.)

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			15	16	17	18
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26	27	28				

BLUE

In Charles Randolph-Wright's memory play, a trumpet player named Reuben Clark (Hill Harper) returns to his childhood in a small South Carolina town, where his family owns the only African-American funeral parlor, run by his beautiful, narcissistic, upwardly mobile mother, Peggy (Phylicia Rashad). Unfortunately, Reuben's entire transition to manhood—his leaving home, his rejection of the trumpet, his therapy, and his final coming to terms with his mother—takes place offstage. What we are left with is a patina of literacy and boulevard lyricism but no internal life. (7/9/01) (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100. Closes Sept. 9.)

COMMUNICATIONS FROM A COCKROACH

Don Marquis's poet cockroach, Archy, and his pal Mehitabel the cat come to the stage, embodied by Ralph Lee's beautiful and expressive puppets. These tales of New York in the twenties—including a hilariously poignant excursion to Long Island and a ditty about Prohibition—have held up surprisingly well. It's a glimpse not just into the city but also into the tales we all tell ourselves in order to survive in it. Mr. Lee, who adapted the works with Scott Cargle, has created a show that manages to charm kids and make adults smile ruefully. Neal Kirkwood's music, performed live, adds a jazzy, edgy note. (For venue and schedule information, call 479-7710. Closes Sept. 16.)

DOWN SOUTH

In a comedy by Doug Field, the Rattlestick Theatre takes aim at the Cuban-missile crisis. (224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 239-6200. Closes Sept. 9.)

42ND STREET

As a domineering diva who breaks her ankle before the big opening night, the wonderful Christine Ebersole steals the show in this revival of the 1980 tap musical based on the 1933 film. But it has to be said: it was probably easy to do. As the young chorine who steps in to save the day, Kate Levering doesn't have enough star power to shine above the legions of hoofers who crowd the stage, and Michael Cumpsty, as the gruff director, is sorely miscast. Still, if this sort of show is your cup of tea, the songs are wonderful and the dancing is fine—just know that the cup is not quite full. (Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

HELLO MUDDAH, HELLO FADDUH!

A musical by Doug Bernstein and Rob Krausz, inspired by the Allan Sherman song of the same

name, which follows the relationship of a couple from their childhood days at Camp Grenada to marriage in suburbia to retirement in Florida. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 239-6200.)

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

Outdoor performances of "Romeo and Juliet," directed by Terrence O'Brien. (Boscobel Restoration, Garrison, N.Y. For ticket information and directions, call 845-265-9575. Closes Sept. 5.)

IF YOU EVER LEAVE ME, I'M GOING WITH YOU!

From the husband-and-wife acting and comedy-writing team Renee Taylor and Joseph Bologna, a play about their thirty-six-year relationship—which has included a wedding reception on "The Merv Griffin Show" and the renewal of their marriage vows five times. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

LOBBY HERO

In another era, the contrivances of Kenneth Lonergan's new play would have been called hokum. But because Lonergan is the writer and director of the moving and successful film "You Can Count on Me" and the author of the acclaimed plays "This Is Our Youth" and "The Waverly Gallery" the public is expecting him to aim high. He does, and misses. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Closes Sept. 2.)

LOVE, JANIS

A musical play about Janis Joplin, built around her songs, writings, and interviews. Though it contains no new insight, it's a useful corrective to the drunken, drug-addicted legend, and the production is a fine one. Randal Myler directed with a sure eye for the telling detail, and the seven-member band really cooks. (Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.)

MAJOR BARBARA

Cherry Jones, as a major in the Salvation Army, and David Warner, as her rich munitions-manufacturer father, Andrew Undershaft, square off in this revival of George Bernard Shaw's 1905 examination of the social order, under the direction of Daniel Sullivan. Shaw's merry-prankster ironies on the subjects of salvation and capitalism are no less timely today than they were a hundred years ago, but the play has built-in dramatic limits. When it comes to actual human beings, Shaw is perhaps too clever by half; one could say that there is nothing at stake but the future of humanity. Also with Zak Orth and Dana Ivey, who, as the practical matriarch of the Undershaft family, provides unknowingly witty commentary on the essential nature of family values. (7/30/01) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300. Closes Sept. 9.)

THE MOON IN VAIN

Rae C. Wright portrays the actress Irina Arkadina in the first installment of a triptych inspired by Che-



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"Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia" revives ancient court-dance traditions, in performances at Jacob's Pillow and the Joyce Theatre.

khov's "The Seagull," set a year after the original play's end. Written by Ms. Wright and Lee Gundesheimer. Tuesdays through Thursdays, through Aug. 30. (Dixon Place, 309 E. 26th St. 532-1546.)

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

The Aquila Theatre Company's version of Shakespeare's comedy, set in London in the sixties. (45 Bleecker Street Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 529-4530. Closes Sept. 16.)

NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL FRINGE FESTIVAL Experimental, multidisciplinary, and multimedia performances at numerous venues on the Lower East Side, by troupes from sixteen U.S. cities and seventeen countries. Continues through Aug. 26. (For tickets, performance schedules, and other information, call 420-8877 or 888-374-6436.)

THE PRODUCERS

High-camp heaven from Mel Brooks, who wrote the music and the lyrics for this monster-hit version of his 1968 movie—in which two scoundrels try to bilk their investors by staging a surefire failure, entitled "Springtime for Hitler." The performing centerpiece of the show is Nathan Lane, as the flamboyant huckster Max Bialystock; his kind of high-amperage panache is in limited supply these days, and both he and the excellent Matthew Broderick, as the hapless accountant Leo Bloom, deliver the mail. Expertly staged by Susan Stroman. (5/7/01) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

SAINT LUCY'S EYES

Ruby Dee portrays a back-room abortionist in civil-rights-era Memphis, in an encore staging of Bridgette A. Wimberly's drama. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200. Closes Sept. 2.)

THE SEAGULL

Mike Nichols directs Chekhov's play, the second production in the New York Shakespeare Festival's outdoor season. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park, near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 539-8750. Closes Aug. 19.)

SHUT UP AND LOVE ME

A limited-run encore engagement of the performance artist Karen Finley's latest examination of sexuality. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391. Closes Aug. 25.)

STONES IN HIS POCKETS

Marie Jones's play is set in an Irish village where a big-budget Hollywood movie is being made. Conleth Hill and Seán Campion play two extras in the movie and all thirteen other characters as well. Though the play has its clever ways when it comes to sending up both Hollywood and Irish mores, the stories told here aren't anything you haven't seen before. (4/16/01) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

A THOUSAND CLOWNS

Tom Selleck is the eccentric Murray Burns, in a revival of Herb Gardner's 1962 comedy. John Rando is the director. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

TICK, TICK . . . BOOM!

The title represents the late author Jonathan Larson's fear of time running out on his musical dreams. The show is set on the eve of the composer's thirtieth birthday—his Walpurgisnacht—as he is caught between the pressures to succeed and to settle. The slick, hardworking cast of three is well directed by Scott Schwartz, and, with Larson's plotline deftly reworked by David Auburn, the production has a fetching modesty and reveals Larson's idiosyncrasy, energy, and promise. (7/9/01) (Jane Street Theatre, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

TOPDOG/UNDERDOG

In Suzan-Lori Parks's new play, two brothers who live together in a seedy room argue, comfort, and, as brothers will, provoke each other, with consequences that can perhaps be predicted—their names are Lincoln and Booth. And they are as different from each other as a tortoise and a hare: as Lincoln, a former three-card-monte dealer who is trying to turn his life around, Jeffrey Wright exhibits both shame and slyness, while Don Cheadle, as the younger, excitable Booth, is full of "scheming and dreaming." They are, under the direction of George C. Wolfe, wonderful to watch, but Parks's play contains too much clunky, overwritten exposition, and it keeps letting the air out of its own tires. (8/6/01) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes Sept. 2.)

WEDDING PICTURES

The Vital Theatre company presents a comedy by Judy Korotkin, about a woman who calls off her wedding after her grandmother dies. Stephen Sunderlin is the director. (432 W. 42nd St., 3rd Fl. 592-0129.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA

Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN

Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES

Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.

CABARET

Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CHICAGO

Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

CONTACT

Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA

Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.

THE DINNER PARTY

Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

THE FANTASTICKS

Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 2001:

A SPOOF ODYSSEY

Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

FOSSE

Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. (Closes Aug. 25.)

THE FULL MONTY

Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.

KISS ME, KATE

Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

THE LION KING

New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

LES MISÉRABLES

Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

THE MUSIC MAN

Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.

PERFECT CRIME

Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

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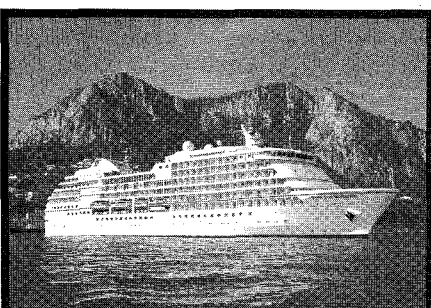
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THE PLAY ABOUT THE BABY
Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.
(Closes Sept. 1.)

PROOF
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of
Broadway. 239-6200.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.

THE SYRINGA TREE
Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.

TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

ELIOT FELD'S BALLET TECH

The company that co-founded the Joyce Theatre returns with two programs of revivals for its summer engagement. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Aug. 13-18 at 8.)

"DANCE, THE SPIRIT OF CAMBODIA"

According to the few court dancers to survive Pol Pot's régime, Cambodian dance started with Creation: in the myth the performers tell, Apsaras—dancers who in their celestial forms entertained the gods and in their earthly incarnations, as nubile temple devotees, performed for kings—arose from the agitation of a serpent writhing in a sea of milk. This creation myth suggests the primary role that dance once had in Cambodia. "Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia," a forty-two-person project of the Royal University of Fine Arts, in Phnom Penh, resuscitates the godly tradition. Women dancers perform as giants, princesses, deities, mermaids, and demons with a statuesque precision that calls to mind the bas reliefs at Angkor Wat, from which their rich vocabulary of individual gestures is said to derive. The male performers are the monkeys, naturally, rolling around on the floor and picking fleas off each other's hairy backs with beastly relish. The excited clangor provided by the musicians organizes the chaos, a task otherwise performed by the gods. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Aug. 21-24 at 8, Aug. 25 at 2 and 8, and Aug. 26 at 2.)

"MOVEMENT ZOO"

The "fourographers" Chris Elam, Jennifer Harmer, Justin Jones, and Chris Yon—the N.Y.U. grads responsible for this dance menagerie—believe it's perfectly possible to put on a fun show that is also serious art. First, the dances need to be shorter (about seven minutes shorter, says Elam). And audiences will find it less alienating if the dance works are character-driven, even if the characters are more beetle than human, as in Elam's "Inabable," or more creepy than comforting, as in Harmer's "View from the Pool," in which suburbanites skim leaves off a kiddie pool, then launch themselves like gawky predators into each other's unwelcoming laps. (The University Settlement, 184 Eldridge St., near Rivington St. 420-8877. Aug. 17 at 7, Aug. 19 at 9:15, Aug. 21 at 5:15, Aug. 25 at 10:15, and Aug. 26 at noon.)

CORTEZ & CO. CONTEMPORARY/BALLET

The eight-member company, under the direction of the choreographer and former Paul Taylor dancer Hernando Cortez, presents a preview of "The Man and the Echo," set to Edvard Grieg's "Holberg Suite." The program concludes with "EarthBeat." (Bryant Park, Sixth Ave. at 42nd St. Aug. 15 at 6. No tickets necessary.)

LINCOLN CENTER OUT OF DOORS

Free alfresco dance events. Aug. 15 at 6: Badenya Les Frères Coulibaly. (Robertson Plaza.) ♦ Aug. 15 at 8 and Aug. 16 at 10:30 A.M. and 8: Muntu Dance Theatre of Chicago. (Evening performances at Damrosch Park; morning show in Robertson Plaza.) ♦ Aug. 17 at 8: Monte/Brown Dance.

(Damrosch Park.) ♦ Aug. 21 at 8: American Indian Dance Theatre. (Damrosch Park.) ♦ Aug. 23 at 4 (with the McGarrigle Sisters, at Robertson Plaza) and 7: Maia Dance Theatre. (Damrosch Park.) (For information, call 875-5391.)

NOCHE FLAMENCA

The premier flamenco company moves its annual summer engagement to a locale with the proper mix of alcohol and art: Joe's Pub, at the Public. (425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Aug. 16 and Aug. 23 at 8:30, Aug. 17-18 and Aug. 24-25 at 7 and 9:30, and Aug. 19 and Aug. 26 at 7.)

"RIVERDANCE—ON BROADWAY"

Not the Lord of the Dance with his shirt off and the leather truss. The other one. (Gershwin Theatre, 222 W. 51st St. 307-4100. Aug. 15, Aug. 18, Aug. 22, and Aug. 25 at 2 and 8; Aug. 16-17, Aug. 21, and Aug. 23-24 at 8; and Aug. 19 and Aug. 26 at 3.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE FESTIVAL

Aug. 15-17 at 8, Aug. 18 at 2 and 8, and Aug. 19 at 2: "Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia." ♦ Aug. 16-17 at 8:15, Aug. 18 at 2:15 and 8:15, and Aug. 19 at 5: The troupe 8 & ah 1, in "Confessions of Love." ♦ Aug. 21-24 at 8, Aug. 25 at 2 and 8, and Aug. 26 at 2: Hubbard Street. ♦ Aug. 23-24 at 8:15, Aug. 25 at 2:15 and 8:15, and Aug. 26 at 5: Urban Bush Women, in "Hair Stories." (Becket, Mass. For information about tickets, call 413-243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE CONCERTS

MARY CHAPIN CARPENTER

One of the best songwriters of her generation recently delivered a new album, "Time*Sex*Love," her first studio effort in five years. With the eternal country-rock rebel Steve Earle. (Theatre at Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Aug. 15 at 8.)

HOWARD FISHMAN QUARTET

Swing and old-time folk music from one of Brooklyn's finest bands. (Robert F. Wagner, Jr., Park, Battery Park City. Aug. 16 at 7. No tickets necessary.)

LINCOLN CENTER OUT OF DOORS

The free late-summer festival on the grounds of Manhattan's temple of high culture. Aug. 18-19, starting at 1: Two days of American blues, gospel, folk, and rock. The headliners include David Johansen and the Harry Smiths and Patti Smith on the first night and Odette on the second. ♦ Aug. 23 at 6: The drummer Andrew Cyrille, who is best known for his galvanizing work with the avant-jazz pianist Cecil Taylor. ♦ Aug. 24 at 7:30: Abdullah Ibrahim, the South African piano titan, brings the sounds of deep blues and gospel to his swaying improvisations. The singer Mary Stallings will demonstrate why, in a crowded field of contemporary jazz vocalists, she's creating a stir. ♦ Aug. 25-26, starting at 1:30: A festival of Afro-Caribbean music and poetry. The big draw on the first night is the final act, taking place at 8, when one Latin percussion legend, the conga giant Carlos (Patato) Valdes, pays tribute to another, the late timbales master Tito Puente, with the help of the Harbor Conservatory Big Band. The festival winds down the following evening with a performance of samba music, starting at 8. (For more information, call 875-5108.)

JANET JACKSON

While her more famous older brother's career spirals ever further into surreal self-parody, Janet moves forward with her campaign for Madonna-style world domination. While Janet's voice is a bit on the thin side, her signature brand of glitzy pop spectacle remains peerless. (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Aug. 22-23 at 8.)

JASON MORAN

You can still hear plenty of Moran's mentors—Andrew Hill, Richard Muhl Abrams, and Jaki Byard—in his piano playing, and more power to him. Channelling the spikier styles of those deep

individualists has allowed Moran to stay clear of the tired Herbie Hancockisms that cloud the work of his peers. (Jazz Gallery, 290 Hudson St., near Spring St. 242-1063. Aug. 23-25 at 9 and 10:30.)

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!

Aug. 19 at 7:30: The Senegalese singer Baaba Maal is known for soaring melodies and churning percussion and lyrics that dabble in mystical imagery. His latest CD, the timeless and earthy "Missing You (Mi Yeewni)," was recorded outdoors after dark in the seaside town of Nibunk, Senegal. The band—harps, balaphons, acoustic guitars, drums—features traditional instruments from all over Africa. This late-summer engagement promises to be as moving as the album, right down to the chirping crickets that were captured during its recording. (Prospect Park Bandshell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. 718-855-7882, ext. 45.)

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE

Lyle Lovett, the wry, dapper Texan with the ten-gallon haircut, and his Large Band close out the alfresco music series with a benefit concert. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 360-2777. Aug. 20 at 8.)

MATCHBOX TWENTY

Quite possibly the blandest tour this side of a Bread reunion, the edgeless Matchbox Twenty plies its corporate comfort rock to adventure-phobic audiences across the country. Matchbox's main man, Rob Thomas, may have penned and crooned Santana's blockbuster single "Smooth" a couple of years back, but you'll find no such Latin spice or swagger here. With the equally yawn-inducing and earnest *Train*. (Jones Beach Theatre. 516-221-1000. Aug. 24 at 7.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BOWERY BALLROOM

6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Aug. 18: Laura Cantrell may have been born in Nashville, but she has spent half her life in New York City, where as the host of WFMU's "RadioThrift Shop" she has tried to bring a little country comfort to her adoptive home. Cantrell is also a talented performer; she released a striking debut album, "Not the Tremblin' Kind," last year. Aug. 21: Grant-Lee Phillips and Mike Doughty. As the ex-lead singers of two of the nineties' most criminally undersung bands (Grant Lee Buffalo and Soul Coughing, respectively), this double bill offers an eclectic mix of dark, folksy Americana and enjoyably skewed "post-rock" from artists who would, in a more perfect world, be playing bigger rooms. Aug. 24-25: The delicious double-guitar pop of Luna.

IRVING PLAZA

17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Aug. 23-24: Tom Jenkinson, the Englishman who tweaks processors, samplers, and the bass guitar under the name of *Squarepusher*, makes a rare U.S. appearance. His screeching combination of changing tempos and pounding bass has won him a following among the fringe fans of electronic music. This is not dance music, however; midway through Squarepusher's first Stateside show, in June, a baggy-panted raver was seen walking disappointedly toward the back of the crowd, the faint glimmer of glow sticks illuminating his pockets. With the melodic electronica of *Plaid*. Aug. 25: Baaba Maal (see Concerts—Celebrate Brooklyn!). ♦ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the Society, call 696-9737.

KNITTING FACTORY

74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Aug. 17: The front-porch ballads and lilting, whimsical waltzes of *Clem Snide*. Aug. 19: Armistead Burwell Smith IV and Rob Crow and the shifting cast of West Coast musicians who record with them under the name *Pinback* make pleasant pop salted with low-key electronics. A charming indifference prevails; as

*** —Rolling Stone

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—US Weekly

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—Newsweek

"Sheer beauty, long out of style in pop music, makes a glorious comeback in this lush and mellow dreamscape."

—USA Today

REVEAL

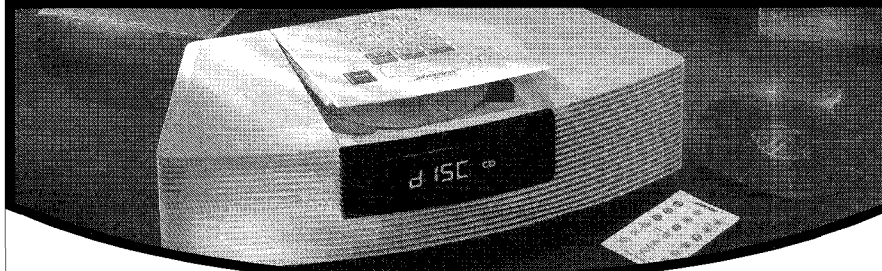
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they sing on the song "Crutch," "No one cares too much over what happened to you." Aug. 26: **Songs:** Ohia's sole member, Jason Molina, hails from Lorain, Ohio, where he once was a heavy-metal bass player. Now a guitarist who sings with an anguished, high-pitched tenor, he makes intense folk-influenced music.

MERCURY LOUNGE

217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Aug. 16: The All Mighty Senators hail from Baltimore, Maryland, and they are led by Landis Expandis, a six-foot-plus-tall singer and drummer who performs with a special Pepto-Bismol-pink-colored kit that allows him to play standing up. Expandis, who also likes to be called Cool Aid, dresses as a superhero and cites as influences such luminaries as Spiderman, Sun Ra, Bootsy Collins, and Martin Luther King, Jr. He calls the funky guitar and horn-heavy music he makes "rock & soul," and it is designed to empower the inner superhero in us all. Oh, and to make you dance. Expandis and his cohorts succeed admirably. Aug. 18: **Drums and Tuba**, a highly infectious trio—tuba, drums, and guitar—that laces its loop-filled songs with New Orleans-style grooves and some progressive-rock guitar heroics.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL

59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Through Sept. 1: Through sheer tenacity and the application of a vocal talent that has steadily ripened with the passing years, Carol Sloane has become one of the grandes dames of jazz singing. Her knowing interpretations of lyrics and sly phrasing should be closely studied by the new generation of chanteuses. Dining.

BIRDLAND

315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Aug. 15-18: The still brash former wunderkind Jon Faddis has always been a bravura trumpeter, but now he does it with maturity. Aug. 22-23: Jazz guitarists come and go, usually in a flurry of flying fingers, but the meticulous craftsman and elegant stylist Bucky Pizzarelli has been with us for nearly six decades. Aug. 24-25: The singer Karrin Allyson hit on a good thing with her latest album, "Ballads: Remembering John Coltrane," on which she interprets the standards that the iconic saxophonist cut on his landmark 1961 disk "Ballads." Dining.

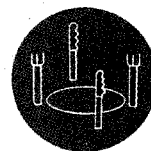
BLUE NOTE

131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Aug. 19: The McCoy Tyner trio. With Mac Gollehon's Smokin' Section. Aug. 21-26: The Mal Waldron trio. The pianist Waldron was immortalized in Frank O'Hara's famous poem, "The Day Lady Died." Off the page, he's still playing, and he can turn three notes into a symphony. Sharing the bill is Benny Green, who will be performing solo. The pianist has shaken a nasty case of the funkies—that insidious affliction that makes musicians play rote blues lines that were old when Ray Charles was using them—and has blossomed into a top-drawer mainstream stylist.

IRIDIUM

1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through Aug. 19: Long before Latin music attained its current clout, the trumpeter and congero Jerry Gonzalez and the Fort Apache Band were mixing jazz and authentic Latin rhythms into a steaming brew that left plenty of room for heated Coltrane-styled improvisations and percussive fervor. The band's best assets are its topnotch soloists, including the pianist Larry Willis and the bassist Andy Gonzalez. Aug. 21-26: The late Milt Jackson was such a towering figure among modern vibraphonists that it can take two accomplished players of the instrument, Bobby Hutcherson and Stefon Harris (who sits in here Friday through Sunday), to pay Jackson adequate tribute. Hutcherson, a post-bop virtuoso, is one of the key innovators of the vibes; Harris, a venturesome young player bursting with spirit, seems poised to join him in the pantheon. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator Les Paul.

TABLES FOR TWO



INSIDE

9 Jones St. (229-9999)—Now that Anne Rosenzweig has closed down her Upper East Side Lobster Club, which seemed like a fond relic even though it was only six years old, she has done something quite daring: created an ideal neighborhood spot for people who love to eat but don't feel like the trip to the Flatiron district—where ambitious chefs will gladly knock your socks off for a price.

Her new café is hidden on a quiet street, in the company of a record store, a pottery studio, and the celebrated Florence Meat Market, which is where Rosenzweig buys her meat. On a recent night, her customers included several svelte silver-haired couples; blond mother-and-daughter look-alikes; and two long-haired bikers, their tattooed arms displayed like gallery art, paying for their meal with a platinum card.

In spite of the dated décor (call it early *Metro-politan Home*) and retro prices (nothing tops \$18), the food is decidedly fresh. Rosenzweig and her co-owner and chef, Charleen Badman, specialize in greenmarket-driven cuisine, so the focus is on seasonal ingredients—often no more than three or four to a dish—put together in a way that lets them assert their most vibrant qualities. A salad of shaved corn, chopped peaches, and almonds accompanies the salt-and-pepper-shrimp appetizer, whose fried shells Rosenzweig instructs you to eat intact, which is a great idea—sort of like vinegar-potato-chip-wrapped crustaceans. There's almost always something on the menu to dip into garlicky aioli—recently it was cakelike sweet-corn fritters.

Right now, the entrées on the changing menu are summery and light (with the exception of the steak frites, which comes with béarnaise): a pair of tempura-fried soft-shell crabs arrive on top of triangles of red watermelon and sprinkled with feta; grilled salmon is paired with cucumbers and mango. On the bar menu, the soft-shell crabs appear in what has to be the world's best club, on toasted brioche with lemon mayo and bacon. At the Lobster Club, Rosenzweig's fearlessness when it came to being a little old-fashioned was part of the charm, and the same goes here, especially when it comes to desserts. The banana split with malted-milk-ball ice cream is good, but cherry clafoutis is wonderful—if only because nobody makes it any more. (Open Mondays through Saturdays for dinner; Sundays for brunch and dinner. Entrées \$13-\$18.)

—Emily Nunn

MAKOR

35 W. 67th St. (601-1000)—Aug. 15 and 22: The Howard Fishman quartet (see Concerts).

UP OVER JAZZ CAFÉ

351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—Aug. 17-18: The Arturo O'Farrill trio. The pianist earned his Latin chops first hand—his dad was Chico O'Farrill, one of the godfathers of Afro-Cuban jazz. But Arturo is also a persuasive mainstream player, steadily carving out an identity of his own.

VILLAGE VANGUARD

178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Jacky Terrason (here with his trio through Aug. 19) is a defiantly eccentric pianist who walks the line between cliff-diving jaunts of imagination and self-conscious mannerisms. A recent affair with the Fender Rhodes electric piano hasn't diminished his grab-bag leanings any. Aug. 21-26: With the drummer Paul Motian, the saxophonist Joe Lovano, and the guitarist Bill Frisell on board, who needs a bass player? This magisterial trio can be both poetic and raucous in the course of a set, unafraid to indulge in tonal and rhythmic contusions or coolly bask in lyrical waters. The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra holds sway on Mondays.

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RAVEL *Boléro* and other works

Monday, November 19, 2001 at 8 PM
NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Kurt Masur, Music Director and Conductor
BRUCKNER Symphony No. 4, "Romantic"
and other works

Friday, December 14, 2001 at 8 PM
KIROV ORCHESTRA
Valery Gergiev, Music Director and Conductor
Vladimir Feltsman, Piano
ALL-RACHMANINOFF PROGRAM
Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini
and other works

Wednesday, January 30, 2002 at 8 PM
ORCHESTRÉ DE PARIS
Christoph Eschenbach, Music Director and Conductor
Pierre-Laurent Aimard, Piano
RAVEL *Daphnis et Chloé* Suite No. 2
and other works

Wednesday, February 13, 2002 at 8 PM
SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY
Michael Tilson Thomas, Music Director and Conductor
Michael Schade, Tenor
Thomas Hampson, Baritone
MAHLER *Das Lied von der Erde*
and other works

Intro to the Classics Package (Series 21):
Prime Parquet \$415; Parquet \$295; Dress Circle \$219;
Front Balcony \$169; Rear Balcony \$109



Great Voices...

Choral Classics

Tuesday, October 9, 2001 at 8 PM
CINCINNATI MAY FESTIVAL CHORUS
 Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra
 James Conlon, Conductor
 Marina Shaguch, Soprano
 Anthony Rolfe Johnson, Tenor
 Olaf Bar, Baritone
 Cincinnati May Festival Chorus
 American Boychoir
 James Litton, Music Director

BRITTEN War Requiem

This program is presented in association with the Cincinnati May Festival. James Conlon, Music Director. This performance made possible, in part, by generous gifts to the Carnegie Hall Endowment Fund and the Cincinnati May Festival from The Corbett Foundation.

Saturday, January 12, 2002 at 8 PM
ORCHESTRA OF ST. LUKE'S
 Sir Andrius Previn, Conductor
 Barbara Bonney, Soprano
 David Wilson-Johnson, Bass-Baritone
 Carnegie Hall Workshop Chorus
 John Oliver, Chorus Preparation
BRITISH ANTHEM Requiem

Wednesday, February 6, 2002 at 8 PM
ROYAL CONCERTGEBOUW ORCHESTRA
 AMSTERDAM
 Riccardo Chailly, Conductor
 Janine Wilson, Soprano
 Peter Lenz, Mezzo-Soprano
 Westminster Choir
 Joseph Flummerfelt, Music Director
MAHLER Symphony No. 2, "Resurrection"

Tuesday, April 30, 2002 at 8 PM
PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
 Mariss Jansons, Music Director and Conductor
 Hei-Kyung Hong, Soprano
 Susanna Mentzer, Mezzo-Soprano
 Christian Elsner, Tenor
 John Relyea, Bass-Baritone
 The Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh
 Robert Page, Director
MOZART Requiem

The Choral Classics series is made possible, in part, by an endowment fund for choral music established in memory of Judith Arron and Robert Shaw by S. Donald Sussman.

Choral Classics Package (Series 9):
 Parquet \$255; Dress Circle \$204; Front Balcony \$157; Rear Balcony \$106



Star Power...

Chamber Music

Wednesday, November 7, 2001 at 8 PM
ANNE-SOPHIE MUTTER, Violin
CAMERATA SALZBURG
ALL-MOZART PROGRAM
 Violin Concertos Nos. 1, 2, and 5

Friday, April 26, 2002 at 8 PM
LOS ANGELES CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
 Jeffrey Kahane, Music Director and Conductor
 Thomas Quasthoff, Baritone
BACH Cantata No. 82, "Ich habe genug"; Cantata No. 56, "Ich will der Kreuzstab gerne tragen" and other works

Thursday, May 2, 2002 at 8 PM
KREMERATA BALTICA
GIDON KREMER, Leader and Soloist
AFTER MOZART
 Program to include works by Mozart, Haydn, and Schnittke.

Chamber Music Package (Series 10): Prime
 Parquet \$213; Parquet \$144; Dress Circle \$115; Front Balcony \$89; Rear Balcony \$59

...Perfect Endings

Carnegie Hall Classics

Friday, October 19, 2001 at 8 PM
CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
 Daniel Barenboim, Music Director, Conductor, and Piano
 Angela Denoke, Soprano
 Peter Seiffert, Tenor
 John Tomlinson, Bass

WAGNER Die Walküre, Act I and other works

Friday, November 9, 2001 at 8 PM
ANNE-SOPHIE MUTTER, Violin
FRONDSHEIM SOLOISTS
IVALDI The Four Seasons and other works

Friday, January 25, 2002 at 8 PM
THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA
 Christoph von Dohnanyi, Music Director and Conductor
BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 5 and other works

Friday, February 8, 2002 at 8 PM
SAINT LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
 Hans Turk, Music Director and Conductor
 Gary Graffman, Piano

DEBussy La Mer and other works
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Friday, February 15, 2002 at 8 PM
MUNICH PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
 James Levine, Music Director and Conductor
 Heidi Grant Murphy, Soprano
SCHUBERT Symphony No. 9, "The Great" and other works

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CARNEGIE HALL

ART MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—“Beyond the Easel: Decorative Painting by Bonnard, Vuillard, Denis and Roussel, 1890-1930,” which traces the careers of the four post-Impressionist painters, is the visual equivalent of a beach book. But it's more Jackie Collins than Tom Clancy. The imagery these artists preferred—cozy interiors, cavorting poodles, outings at the beach—looks far from radical today, but in fin-de-siècle France the infusion of art into everyday life was groundbreaking. Much of the work was commissioned for private homes; a pair of torchères designed by Lucien Levy-Dhurér flanking the entrance signals the decorative, domestic theme. (In a related but misguided strategy, the gallery walls are painted in murky period colors: oxblood and deep teal.) Of the four artists, Vuillard fares best. Though his compact, mosaiclike brushwork can cloy, in a painting like “Windows Overlooking the Woods,” a sweeping view of the French countryside, it takes on the knotty magic of a tapestry. Through Sept. 9. ♦ “Summer Selections: American Landscape

Joel Shapiro. Three are cast in bronze, two in aluminum (one painted fire-engine red and the other cobalt blue). All five employ a similar formal strategy: square and rectangular bars are joined together at apparently haphazard angles. The arrangements have a Constructivist flavor and, in the case of the colored sculptures, invite an anthropomorphic reading, with the bars legible as arms, trunks, and legs. But the most ambitious piece, which is twenty-four feet high and looks gravitationally impossible, resembles a tumbling game of pickup sticks. Through late fall. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—An antidote to Gehry fever, the first half of the Mies van der Rohe extravaganza has opened with “Mies in Berlin.” Matching its subject's famous simplicity, the show is a calmly paced bildungsroman, tracing a thirty-year progression from Schinkel-esque prodigy to modernist master. Understandably, the show's curators, Terence Riley and Barry Bergdoll, worried that canonical projects like the Tugendhat House and the Barcelona Pavilion might seem too familiar. Their decision to freshen things up with Thomas Ruff's cloying colorized photographs is the show's only lapse. Otherwise, it's easy to fall



The Nashville-born singer-songwriter and local country-music disk jockey Laura Cantrell plays the Bowery Ballroom (see Night Life).

Drawings and Watercolors.” Nearly fifty summer landscapes and seascapes—all works on paper by American artists—are tucked away in the cozy mezzanine galleries of the American Wing. Maurice Prendergast conveys the simple pleasures of a seaside stroll in a jaunty watercolor of nineteenth-century day-trippers. On a darker note, Thomas Cole's fastidious drawing “The Wounded Indian Slaking His Death-Thirst” pits the eternity of nature against the fragility of life, as massive boulders and contorted trees dwarf the tiny stooping figure. Frequent visitors to the museum will get a kick out of Frederick Arthur Bridgman's studies of the Temple of Dendur, portrayed against a view of Egypt as opposed to the familiar Central Park setting. Through Sept. 2. ♦ “Dancing on the Roof: Photography and the Bauhaus (1923-29)” focusses on the work of László Moholy-Nagy and his students at the Weimar haven for artistic experiment. Through Aug. 26. ♦ In summertime, the museum's roof is transformed into Met Hampton (a bikini-free zone). This year, the sun worshippers and singles who mob the roof on weekend evenings share their turf with five large sculptures by

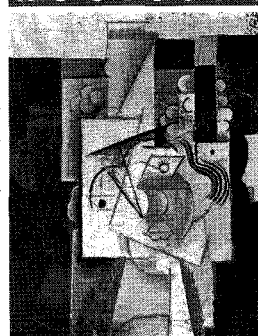
under the spell of Mies's planar vision, his integration of landscape and garden design (more suited to a Californian than a Germanic climate), and his infectious love of *betonte Leere*, or heightened emptiness. A complementary show (at the Whitney) picks up where this one leaves off, with Mies's arrival in the United States in 1938. Through Sept. 11. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—At Frank Gehry's first retrospective, at the Whitney in 1986, undulant titanium roofs and wriggling walls were nowhere in sight. The Los Angeles-based architect seemed a quirky regional figure, fond of unorthodox materials (cardboard, chain-link fencing) and given to chopping projects into multiple room-size buildings. Nobody could have predicted that he would soon be the world's most sought-after and publicized architect. This new, profoundly exhilarating show tracks Gehry's path to Bilbao, and offers working models of current projects in Scotland, Germany, Cleveland, Chicago, Los Angeles,

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lithograph and
stencil, 1956,
signed in pencil
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and New York. It's too much to absorb in a single visit, but even a quick walk-through will leave visitors delighted, buoyed, amazed—and a little nostalgic for the plumb-line architecture that Gehry's fluid, crumpling planes seem poised to supplant. Through Aug. 26. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—For his first New York retrospective, Wayne Thiebaud's career has been served up in four courses, beginning with dessert. During his pastry period, Thiebaud turned cafeteria fare—not just wedges of cake and pie but a whole alphabet of prepared foods—into something enduringly wry and lovely, a celebration of everyday artifice. The stiff and studied portraits that follow are the show's weakest moment, but Thiebaud returns to form in the subsequent cityscapes and farmland scenes, creating steep, unapologetic Arcadias. There are echoes of Hopper, Diebenkorn, and Johns throughout, but none of Thiebaud's predecessors have his cool, confectionary jauntiness. Through Sept. 23. ♦ Picking up where MOMA's more engaging early-Mies exhibition leaves off, "Mies in America" looks at how the Master of Less and the Culture of More altered each other. Focussing on a few major commissions—among them the Lake Shore Drive Towers, in Chicago; the Seagram Building; and the Chicago Convention Hall—the exhibition offers a kind of dry immersion in Mies's immaterialist aesthetic. With acres of bland drawings and only a few models, this show isn't going to change many minds: skeptics will leave with a renewed conviction that Mies's buildings are three-dimensional graph paper. But the lucid wall texts, prepared by a curatorial team led by Phyllis Lambert (who first worked with Mies as the client for the Seagram Building), remind us that his simple effects depended upon a host of tweaked, ingenious details. Through Sept. 23. ♦ The Tower of Babel has nothing

on the Whitney this month, as Joseph Grigely transforms the lobby gallery into a chapel of white noise. The artist became deaf at the age of ten, and conducts conversations with nonsigners through notes scribbled by them on scraps of paper. Grigely can speak, so we read only one side of the dialogue, ranging from a series of chitchat non sequiturs ("loud wind now" followed by "Wim Wenders, too") to emphatic declarations ("I want 10%"). More than twenty-five hundred of these scraps are installed floor to ceiling in the oval space, the visual equivalent of a drone. Through Sept. 9. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—The Discovery Room, a hands-on educational program conceived in the museum's dark belly, has just moved into its new and permanent headquarters, a sunny, two-thousand-square-foot play space next door to the familiar big ceremonial canoe at the Seventy-seventh Street entrance. Inside the room, a replica of an African baobab tree spreads its branches over displays about the scientists and artists who studied and re-created it, and a working dinosaur dig busies young paleontologists. There's a surprisingly wide variety of specimens for little kids to hold and shake and investigate, including an outsized dinosaur toe bone, a mastodon tusk, and, resting in a shredded-paper nest, in Drawer 52 of a brand-new child-sized specimen cabinet, one emu egg, now broken. The management describes the accident as a learning experience. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—Like the Whitney's recent foray into computer-aided artmaking, "Digital Printmaking Now" is best enjoyed by turning your expectations way down. Much of what's on view—manipulated photographs or drawings by established names like Donald Sul-

tan, Chuck Close, and Carroll Dunham—uses technology only incidentally. The rest veers toward jokey surrealist photo-collage: flying turtles, lemons with nipples, a plate of inkjet cookies. Strangely, it's the most decorative works that use the new technology best. Some of these—especially the lovely, intricate wallpaperish patterns designed by Carl Fudge and Miriam Dym—might have impressed even that arch-technophobe, William Morris. Through Sept. 2. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

1 Bowling Green (668-6624)—The clothes on exhibit in "The Legacy of Plains Indian Shirts" put the understated military decoration of Manifest Destiny—epaulettes and glorified tie tacks—to shame. Their shining glass beads, porcupine quills, bone, hair, fur, paint, and sinew often obscure the hide or cloth they are embellishing, and, in some, further elaborate fringe hangs well below the hem. One 1885 Lakota cloak represents its wearer's glory literally, with pictographs of gunmen in shirts and pants falling to gunmen in loincloths; a 2000 Montana Blackfoot jacket gets the same effect with text: "Heart Butte Warriors 26-0 State Class 'C' Champions '2000.'" Through Nov. 4. (Open daily, 10 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. (873-3400)—Text-based shows too often try one's patience, but "Independence and Its Enemies in New York" is unexpectedly stirring. Organized to mark the two-hundred-and-twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the show brings to life the events of that fateful summer of '76. In Manhattan, the Declaration was read aloud on the afternoon of July 9. Almost immediately, a crowd of "bad subjects and bad citizens" marched down to Bowling Green to vandalize an equestrian statue of George III. A few fragments of the statue are



COMPENSATE FOR
"HELLO MY
IS... STICKERS.

on view. The rest of it was melted down to make bullets (forty-two thousand of them). As a result, one patriotic wag noted that British troops had "Melted Majesty fired at them." Through Sept. 9. ♦ On a lighter note, a show called "Advertising Drama" offers a selection of theatrical posters printed in the first decade of the twentieth century. Most memorialize largely forgotten melodramas like "Floradora" and "The Boy with the Boodle." The crisp, beautifully designed images show European aristocrats and other undesirables cowering before plucky Yankees who say things like "You've compromised my sweetheart's reputation and you must give me satisfaction!" Through Sept. 16. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

GALLERIES-uptown

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

MORRIS GRAVES

Most people's image of Graves, who died in May, comes from a 1973 photograph of the monklike artist in his leek garden, looking aloof and impossibly handsome. It's easy to see why Merce Cunningham and Marsden Hartley, among others, would have been prone to infatuation. Graves's Zen-inspired art work, as this mini-retrospective reminds us, can be aloof almost to the point of drabness. In his finest works, though, Graves set aside his meditative inclinations in favor of simple observation. The titles ("Vessel Feeling the Grandeur of Space" versus "Irish Goat") tell it all. Through Aug. 17. (Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122.)

SEBASTIAN GROSS / DEAN MONOGENIS

This two-person show has a makeshift quality more typical of a loft in Williamsburg than of a residential building on the Upper East Side. Mono-

genis's paintings—a model-type couple clad in their dainties, a Japanese schoolgirl bending over to reveal her panties—could double as illustrations in any slick fashion magazine. Their paint-by-numbers, mediated style is wearily Warhol. The violence-obsessed, cartoon-inflected canvases of the Chilean-born Gross are more engaging, if flat-footed. Their plump, satirical figures, gunned down in fast-food joints or battered by spouses, suggest George Grosz by way of Fat Albert. Through Aug. 18. (American-European Fine Art, 1100 Madison Ave., at 82nd St. 517-4010.)

RICHARD SERRA / TOM WESSELMAN

It's hard to imagine two artists whose works have less to say to each other: Serra, whose steel monuments have a nearly puritanical solemnity, and Wesselman, the most libidinous of Pop hedonists. Here, though, an accidental connection emerges. Serra's lithographs of inky ellipses resemble the smoke rings that drift from the mouths of Wesselman's svelte nudes. Think of it as Cotton Mather and Hugh Hefner sharing a cigarette. Through Sept. 7. (Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227.)

BETTINA WERNER

Monochrome abstractions made using a "patented technique of colorated salt." The grains range in size from Morton's minuscule to quartz-crystal big, but nothing here approaches the Biblical proportions of a pillar. Werner, who is Italian, mines the tradition of Arte Povera with her use of everyday materials (what's more quotidian than salt?), though the effect is more decorative than earthy. For proof, look no further than the lipstick-red "Kiss from the Queen of Salt," where a border of kosher-size nuggets surrounds a square of finer granules, in the center of which rests an imprint of the artist's lips, a petrified air kiss. Through Aug. 15. (Winston Wächter Mayer, 39 E. 78th St. 327-2526.)

DON VAN VLIET

Back when he was singing lyrics like "I love you, you big dummy. Ha ha ha ha. Quit asking why," Van Vliet, then known as Captain Beefheart,

seemed unassailably weird. As a painter, though, the odd thing about Van Vliet is how honorable and categorizable his work feels. In this sampling of paintings from the eighties, the brashly colored nudes, deer, and monkeys have clearly floated in from the German Expressionist sector of the collective unconscious. They look great—full of coarse impasto and charm—but never quite unfamiliar. Through Sept. 8. (Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 988-1623.)

"MODELS OF OBSERVATION: FLOWERS, FISHES, BIRDS, BUTTERFLIES"

This time traveller of a show combines three Dutch still-life paintings from the seventeenth century with the work of three wildly disparate American artists: Milton Avery, Nancy Graves, and Donald Sultan. The Old Masters meet "This Old House" in Sultan's flock of birds made with floor tiles and tar in lieu of canvas and paint. (Don't miss his small bronze bird perched high above the entrance to the gallery.) Avery's winsome paintings are an antidote to the brooding Sultan; they're art's equivalent of an endless summer day. In Graves's bronze sculpture "Pilot," a botanical behemoth hunkers menacingly on the gallery floor like a still-life on steroids. Through Sept. 29. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550.)

Short List

JAMES BARNES

Adams, 41 W. 57th St. 644-5665. Through Aug. 17.

GALLERIES-CHelsea

"BEAUTY AND THE BEAST"

The summer's sparest show—composed of two large abstract sculptures—is one of its most quietly impressive. Margaret Evangeline's rumpled wall-mounted sheets of aluminum, adorned with driz-

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A model baobab tree and its lifelike inhabitants, part of the new, interactive Discovery Room at the Museum of Natural History.

zlings of purple paint, have a Joan Mitchell-ish elegance. Win Knowlton's construction, also made of aluminum, is a jungle of cast bric-a-brac—it's subterranean, rooty, and secretive, whereas Evangeline's is pure, glittering surface. Through Aug. 31. (Rodgers/9W, 529 W. 20th St. 414-9810.)

"HEROINE"

Fantasy and fashion combine in this uneven group show devoted to the work of five women. Charlotta Westergren spells out a quotation from "Madame Bovary" in flowers cut from the pages of *Martha Stewart Living*, while across the room she stars as a petal-strewn Ophelia in a lush photographic self-portrait. Hope Atherton puts a new twist on an old still-life subject in her hyper-real sculpture of two dead hares sporting tiny saddles. A static puce painting of cheerleaders by Inka Esenhigh, from 1996, demonstrates how much her technique has developed in recent years. Through Aug. 17. (Dee/Glasoe, 529 W. 20th St. 924-7545.)

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

FABRICE GYGI

Gallerygoers still fuming over pregnant chads may find solace in this Swiss artist's sly sendup of the electoral process—he has transformed the gallery into an empty polling station. The objects—a voting booth made of metal tubes and a plastic curtain, a Plexiglas voting box, a wooden bench—all have a generic impermanence, as if they could be dismantled at a moment's notice. Over all, the spare installation seems like some collaboration between Franz Kafka and Donald Judd. Through Aug. 18. (Swiss Institute, 495 Broadway. 925-2035.)

"ELSEWHERE"

Eleven doors conceal as many installations in this knock-knock joke of a group show. Viewers feeling locked out of the real-estate market will relate to Nina Katchadourian and Julia Meltzer's "Wanted," an answering machine visible through a peephole in the door which plays messages received in response

to an ad listing the space as a rental. (At a scant fifty-four square feet with a seven-foot ceiling—the dimensions of a standard American jail cell—the room garnered more than a hundred calls in a single day). Real estate recurs in Christian Uhl's minimalist facsimile of an elevator car and Michael Rakowitz's conversion of his space into a janitorial closet complete with running water. Through Sept. 1. (HEREart, 145 Sixth Ave. 647-0202.)

"THE LP SHOW"

This gleefully subjective survey of album-cover art describes itself as an "homage to a dying art form." It begins at the LP's birth, with a display of Alex Steinweiss's graphic-design output from 1940 to 1961. From his groundbreaking gilded princes, it's only a few steps (guided by a band of LPs around the show's walls, several hundred feet long and six records high) to Olivia Newton John and John Cale. Free association leads from there through booty- and midriff-baring covers, including several years of racy-looking Top-of-the-Pops releases, and various exotica, like a nubile El Tigre in a tiger-print bikini, to animal-themed recordings like "Let's All Sing with the Chipmunks" and the cat-fancying "My Pussy Belongs to Daddy," which seems to fall somewhere in the middle of those categories. In the back room, Christian Marclay's display of more than eighty copies of Herb Alpert's "Whipped Cream and Other Delights," showing a model covered with and otherwise enjoying the title substance, is punctuated with one copy of Pat Cooper's response, "Spaghetti Sauce and Other Delights," which shows the artist draped in and slurping up the title concoction. Through Aug. 17. (Exit Art, 58 Broadway. 966-7745.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

MEREDITH ALLEN

This "portrait gallery of cartoon icons" is actually a series of point-and-shoot photographs of animated-character-shaped novelty Popsicles. The

exhibit's nine images—including "Roger's Beach (Tweety)" and "Moriches Island Road (Bugs)"—plumb a single conceit: the artist's disembodied hand holds a melting ice-cream bar against a pastoral backdrop. The prints glisten in appropriately psychedelic Technicolor, and the show feels like a trip to Coney Island gone awry, replete with sticky fingers and fun-house distortion. Through Aug. 31. (Gracie Mansion, 504 W. 22nd St. 654-7656.)

KONRAD CRAMER

Cramer (1888-1963), a German expatriate who became one of the first American abstract painters, also hung around Alfred Stieglitz's gallery, 291, and experimented with photography. He used crumpled cellophane between Polaroid lenses to create some cute Cubist refractions, and he tinkered with photogram and solarization techniques to make easy-on-the-eye nudes and still-lives. Most of the handsome vintage silver prints here are boldly signed "Cramer/Woodstock," as if to credit the upstate artists' colony as an equal collaborator in his playful machine-age modernism. Through Aug. 24. (Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223.)

GRACIELA FUENTES

The exhibition space at Splendid—best visited around 6:30 P.M., just after it opens but before it comes to life as a bar for local Brooklyn artists—is just the right spot for Fuentes's homesick photos. Each print shows a corner of her New York apartment with a slide of her childhood home, Monterrey, Mexico, projected onto it. In one, a dramatic landscape appears as if reflected on the convex body of a teakettle; similar scenes show up on paper bags, gallon jugs of water, dish racks, bathtubs, and inside a toilet. A smaller series, of five-by-seven-inch postcards titled "Wish You Were Here," offers greetings from Fuentes's ideal world, where the Statue of Liberty presides over a new New York Harbor, one dominated by a rocky Mexican mountain. Through Aug. 30. (Splendid, 132 Greenpoint Ave., Brooklyn. 718-383-7037. Open 6:30 P.M. to 2 A.M., Tuesdays through Sundays, and by appointment.)

KATHY OSBORN



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"THE CITY THAT NEVER SLEEPS"

This group show of New York School photographers, including Lisette Model, Louis Faurer, David Vestal, and Weegee, encompasses the influential generation before them, including Alfred Stieglitz, Walker Evans, Paul Strand, and Berenice Abbott, and the one after them, including Garry Winogrand, Lee Friedlander, Diane Arbus, and Charles Pratt. The city is depicted as an unending photo opportunity: Ellen Auerbach captures Renate Schottelius in mid-leap, dancing on a rooftop, and Evans works the subways with a hidden camera. By day, Winogrand photographs a Central Park peace demonstration; by night, he uncovers after-hours fondling at the Metropolitan Museum's Centennial Ball. Through Aug. 31. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 24th St. 989-7600.)

"INTIMATE"

With Jeanette Barron's photograph of wet towels lumped on a floor and David Armstrong's portraits of feline young men reclining abed, this six-artist show appears at first to be all mussed linens and romanticized squalor. But Edward Quinn's dignified black-and-white prints of girdles and décolletage from the golden age of Hollywood remind viewers of earlier fashions in undress. And individual images linger, like Wendy Ewald's Kentucky mountain urchins and Quinn's haloed Edith Piaf, whose hair seems to cast the photograph's only light. Through Aug. 30. (Scalo, 560 Broadway. 334-9393.)

"MORE THAN ONE"

This sensitive collection of multiple portraits also explores a theme of the moment—size. The head of a larger-than-life little boy in Richard Avedon's mural-size print of "Allen Ginsberg's Family, Paterson, New Jersey, May 3, 1970" is as big as an entire James Van Der Zee portrait of a church communion class, while Arthur S. Mole and John D. Thomas's eleven-by-fourteen-inch aerial shot of hundreds of people forming a portrait of Woodrow Wilson's face reduces each subject to a dot. The good stuff, particularly work by Neal Slavin and August Sander, looks even better than usual in this crowd. Through Aug. 24. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.)

"NO BIG PICTURES"

In response to the recent bigger-is-better trend toward mural-size prints, the gallery fills its two small spaces with a roundup of small images, many from its archives. Unique maquettes from Vito Acconci, Chuck Close, and Joel-Peter Witkin are mixed in with vintage prints by Jacques Henri Lartigue, André Kertész, and Paul Outerbridge. Four color Polaroids by Philip-Lorca diCorcia are framed together to force an oblique narrative, and Robert Frank offers a single contact sheet packed with his greatest hits of 1955-56, some of which eventually made it into his seminal book "The Americans." Through Aug. 31. (Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999.)

"SUMMER SALON"

Half of this seasonally themed exhibit is devoted to images of flowers and butterflies, all charming, if unchallenging, from Judith McMillan, Zeva Oelbaum, and Steve Rifkin. The beaches look better, in Massimo Vitali's arrestingly large and bright Italian scene—which benefits greatly from being the only color piece here, and the most animated by far in subject and composition—and Beatrice Valdes-Paz's pinhole images of families running in the waves. Vitali's picture is almost an advertisement for the crowded stretch of Italian sand it captures, while Valdes-Paz's fuzzy, dark-rimmed shores make you feel you've been there before, and may have even inadvertently posed for her. Through Aug. 24. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (860-1777)—Sebastião Salgado's "Migrations: Humanity in Transition." Over the past seven years, Salgado has visited more than thirty-five countries, travelling with and photographing some of the nearly a hundred million migrants now wandering the planet. Viewers who follow international news may be familiar not only with the trouble spots

he's been to—Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia among them—but also with these images, some of which have appeared in major American news magazines. Nevertheless, the effect of seeing them, particularly the sweeping landscapes, as immaculate black-and-white prints filling these large, open galleries, remains powerful. Through Sept. 9. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

HERBERT LIST

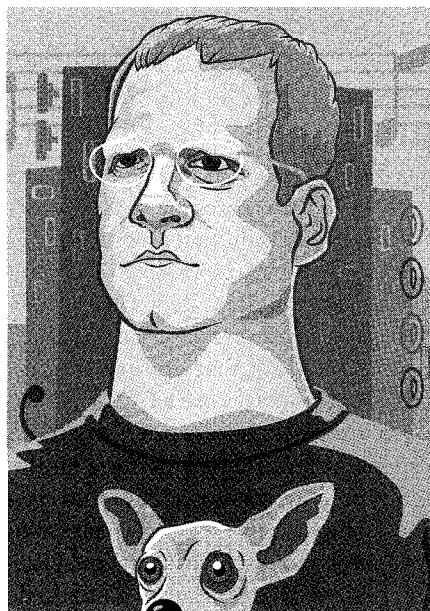
Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 366-4774.
Through Aug. 24.

SEBASTIÃO SALGADO

Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.
Through Aug. 24.

AARON SISKIND

Bruce Silverstein, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930.
Through Aug. 31.



Lowell Liebermann's Violin Concerto has its premiere at Saratoga on Aug. 16.

CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERTS AROUND TOWN

ST. PETERSBURG QUARTET

At a time of the year when most performers are content to recycle the same old stuff—Mozart, Mahler, and the rest—Russia's leading string quartet is touring with a diverse and enticing set of programs, all based in the music of Shostakovich. The group's soulful performances of his quartets, full of expressive nuance, have a rare, theatrical immediacy. In their concert at the Frick Collection they perform the composer's bleak, mercurial Quartet No. 9 in E-Flat Major along with lighter Russian fare by Tchaikovsky (the radiant Quartet No. 1 in D Major) and Glazunov. (1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Aug. 16 at 5:45.)

MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL

Aug. 16 at 8: The music of the Italian Baroque—particularly Vivaldi's—has been a big theme of this year's festival. The vibrant, free-spirited Venice Baroque Orchestra, one of two impressive Italian ensembles invited to perform this year, presents an all-Vivaldi concert at Alice Tully Hall (including "The Four Seasons" violin concertos, with Giuliano Carmignola); the conductor is Andrea Marcon. ♦ Aug. 17-18 at 8: Vladimir Feltsman and Vadim Repin are the respective soloists in Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 24 in C Minor and Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 1, accompanied by the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra under the conductor Louis

Langrée, who also leads music by Haydn (the "London" Symphony) and Ravel. (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 19 at 5: An all-Beethoven program, including the "Ghost" and "Archduke" piano trios, with the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio. (Alice Tully Hall.) ♦ Aug. 21-22 at 8: Gerard Schwarz conducts Mozart's Requiem and "Ave verum corpus" (with the singers Ute Selbig, Florence Quivar, Michael Schade, and Richard Zeller and the Desoff Choirs), along with the Piano Concerto No. 22 in E-Flat Major (with Emanuel Ax). (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 23 at 8: Schubert's "Trout" Quintet, presented by an A-list cast (the Tokyo String Quartet, the pianist John Browning, and the bassist Leigh Mesh); Beethoven's Quartet in E-Flat Major, Op. 127, and Mozart's stormy little "Adagio and Fugue," K. 546, complete the program. (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 24-25 at 8: In the festival's final concerts, Schwarz bids farewell as music director with another all-Mozart program, featuring an audience favorite, Alicia de Larrocha (in the Piano Concerto No. 23 in A Major), along with the "Haffner" and "Jupiter" Symphonies. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500.)

BARGEMUSIC

Aug. 17-18 at 7:30: The hornist William Purvis, a fearless advocate for the most intimidating modern scores, enjoys some kinder, gentler repertoire (with the pianist Mihae Lee), including Schumann's "Adagio and Allegro" and sonatas by Beethoven and Strauss. ♦ Aug. 24-25 at 7:30: Mark Kaplan, a violinist with a smart, incisive sense of style, offers a program of sonatas by Brahms, Debussy, and Beethoven (the "Kreutzer"), along with a recent work by Oded Zehavi; the pianist is Yael Weiss. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

NON SEQUITUR SUMMER FESTIVAL 2001: "VERBAL DEVELOPMENT"

Five writers (including the rock poet Todd Colby and the slam veteran Christina Springer) team up with five composers (including Chien-Yin Chen, Charles Griffin, and the downtown vocal icon Toby Twining) for an edgy program of collaborations on the theme of magic, organized by the impresarios Jed Distler and Regie Cabico. (Clark Studio Theatre, Rose Bldg., Lincoln Center. 663-1967. Aug. 20-22 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

BRIDGEHAMPTON CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

The festival's final programs have a strong international flavor. Aug. 15 at 8: Music by Paul Moravec, an ardent American neo-Romantic, and the late New Zealand composer Douglas Mews ("Tangi Pohutu," for flute and music box) shares the program with works by Haydn and Elgar (the Piano Quintet). The performers include the violinist Scott St. John and the pianist Phillip Bush. (Bridgehampton Presbyterian Church, Bridgehampton, N.Y.) ♦ Aug. 17 at 7: A gala concert, featuring a wine tasting and an informal program of Pachelbel, Gareth Farr (the Indonesian-influenced "Kembang Suling," for flute and marimba), and Tchaikovsky, performed by the flutist Marya Martin, the violinist Philip Setzer, and others. (Channing Daughters Winery, Bridgehampton.) ♦ Aug. 19 at 6:30: A concert that revels in dance rhythms, with music by Couperin, Aaron Jay Kernis ("100 Greatest Dance Hits," a paean to disco), Piazzolla, and Dvořák (the Piano Quintet). The musicians include the violinist Todd Phillips and the violist Cynthia Phelps. (Bridgehampton Presbyterian Church. For more information, call 631-537-6368.)

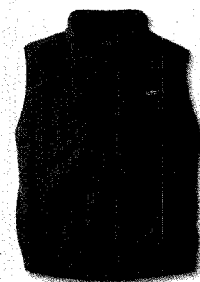
COOPERSTOWN CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Some of the stars of Manhattan's chamber-music scene (such as the bassoonist Frank Morelli, the cellist Astrid Schween, and the Whitman String Quartet) head upstate for the last of the summer's festivals. Highlights include an all-Beethoven concert with a beer tasting provided by the local Brewery Ommegang, an all-Vivaldi program, and performances of works by Brahms, Wolf, and John Corigliano. (Farmers' Museum, Cooperstown, N.Y. For more information, call 888-547-1450. Aug. 15-25.)

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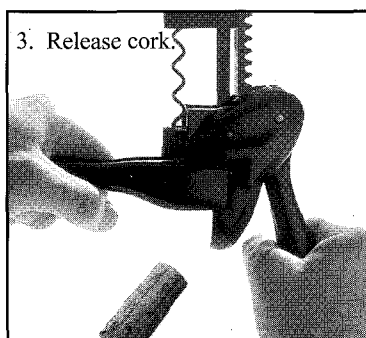
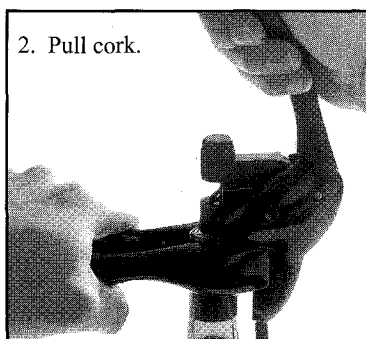
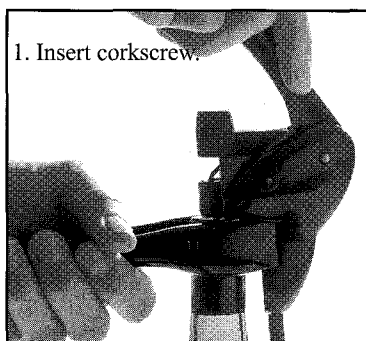
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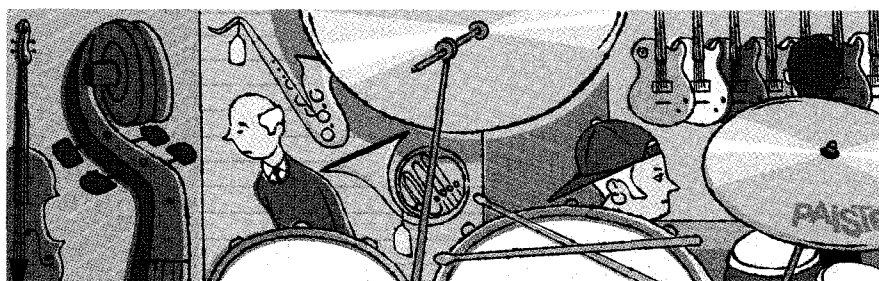
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ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

How to Be a Player

"They can be a total pain, a nightmare, but, oh, they have such great sound," sighs Emmanuel Gradoux-Matt of his charges, the spirited collection of rare and important violins, violas, and cellos he repairs and sells from his shop, the

comes here," growls Jerry Halpern, a guy who looks like an R. Crumb character and speaks in a dark whisper. Halpern owns **MUSIC INN WORLD INSTRUMENTS** (169 W. 4th St.; 243-5715), an unpretentious institution that has specialized in the re-



venerable **MOREL & GRADOUX-MATT INC.** (250 W. 54th St.; 582-8896). "Stern, Pinchas, Bell, they all come here. It's great to deal with these artists—and their instruments are even better!" The shaggy-haired Gradoux-Matt clearly loves his lot: "It dawned on me this is going to be a great life," he says of his decision to train as a restorer. "These instruments were made with the finest materials of their time, and after two hundred and fifty or three hundred years of constant use, of aging and singing and vibrating, they just improve." On a recent bright afternoon (northern light, a workshop must), a craftsman was giving a sixteenth-century viola an affectionate once-over, while Stradivarii and Guarneris sat nearby in various states of dishabille. It can cost fifty thousand dollars to fix a patient, but that's nothing compared to the four million it might take to replace it. Though Gradoux-Matt estimates that a professional musician needs to spend a minimum of a hundred thousand dollars for something that will be "a good tool for his or her art," he also has offerings in the five-thousand-dollar range, for folks who just want to fiddle around. And should an audition for the Philharmonic pop up, the shop will lease you an eighteenth-century Gigli, worth eighty thousand dollars, for a thousand dollars a month.

Downtown, the proprietor of another store specializing in rare instruments also claims a passel of famous customers. "If Ravi Shankar thinks something's wrong with his sitar, he

pair and sale of unusual instruments since 1958. No one could claim that browsing is exactly encouraged here. In fact, it's almost impossible: the shop looks like it was decorated by the Collier brothers and features an accumulation of paper ephemera that appears to have been untouched since Bob Dylan lived down the block. But persistence pays off, especially if you're looking for a hurdy-gurdy or a Persian bronze bell. And even the grumpy Halpern softens a bit when he shows off a particular favorite. Gazing high above his head at a hundred-year-old Indian tamboura that has been oil-painted with a series of court figures, he mumbles tenderly, "And it's not just to look at. It's playable."

Sampling the merchandise is more than encouraged at Sam Ash—or rather, the line of Sam Ashes that have colonized the block of Forty-eighth Street east of Seventh Avenue, where visitors—many of them young men with stadium-size dreams—are invited to "come in and play." In the **SAM ASH GUITAR STORE** (155 W. 48th St.; 719-2625)—other outposts specialize in orchestral instruments, drums, and electronics—the air pulsates with hopeful licks and riffs. Amid the Muddy Waters Telecasters and Peter Frampton Les Pauls, a small area is dedicated to the stringed equivalent of a vintage Pucci dress: a nineteen-sixties Silvertone electric guitar with its original lipstick-tube pickup and a turquoise-and-white body as shiny as a Corvette Stingray (\$300).

—Lynn Yaeger

EDIEL RODRIGUEZ

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA

Charles Dutoit conducts the orchestra's final Saratoga programs. Aug. 15 at 8:15: Wall-to-wall Tchaikovsky, including the Piano Concerto No. 1 (with Gerhard Oppitz) and the "Rococo Variations" (with the cellist Jian Wang). ♦ Aug. 16 at 8:15: Even at a time when hundreds of American composers have embraced a more tonal, melody-based aesthetic, Lowell Liebermann stands out as a radical conservative. The salon-music styles of the late-Romantic Franco-Russian composers—Fauré, Rachmaninoff, Ravel—still linger in his music, though underpinned by twelve-tone rows. Liebermann also has a distinct flair for writing for solo instruments, which makes the premiere of his Violin Concerto (with Chantal Juillet) a notable event; music by Rossini, Mussorgsky, and Mozart (the Oboe Concerto, with Richard Woodhams) completes the program. ♦ Aug. 17 at 8:15: Brahms's Violin Concerto (with Joshua Bell) and Ravel's "Daphnis and Chloé" (with the Montreal Symphony Chorus). ♦ Aug. 18 at 2:30: The chorus (with the soprano Kalliope Vetta) returns for a festive concert of music by Rimsky-Korsakov, Rachmaninoff, and Borodin, along with a suite from Mikis Theodorakis's music for the film "Zorba the Greek." (Saratoga Performing Arts Center, Saratoga Springs, N.Y. For more information, call 518-587-3330.)

TANGLEWOOD

Aug. 15 at 8:30: The renowned Boston Symphony Chamber Players make their only Tanglewood appearance, presenting music by Haydn, Beethoven, Leon Kirchner ("Music for Twelve"), and Stravinsky. ♦ Aug. 17 at 8:30: Richard Goode, today's most thoughtful pianist, plays Mozart's Concerto No. 25 in C Major with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, led by Bernard Haitink. Works by Debussy and Dvořák (the Symphony No. 8) complete the program. ♦ Aug. 18 at 8:30: Haitink returns to the podium for Stravinsky's "Symphony of Psalms" (which the composer dedicated to both the B.S.O. and "the glory of God") and Ravel's "Daphnis and Chloé," both with the Tanglewood Festival Chorus. ♦ Aug. 19 at 2:30: Roberto Abbado conducts the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra in Bernstein's Symphony No. 2, "The Age of Anxiety" (with the pianist Gianluca Cascioli), and Berlioz's "Symphonie Fantastique." ♦ Aug. 19 at 8:30: A jazz evening with the conductor-pianist André Previn and the bassist David Finck. ♦ Aug. 20 at 8:30: Keith Lockhart conducts a Boston Pops concert. ♦ Aug. 24 at 8:30: Donald Runnicles leads the Orchestra of St. Luke's in an all-Mozart program, featuring the pianist Peter Serkin (performing the Concerto No. 19 in F Major). ♦ Aug. 25 at 8:30: The Israel Philharmonic, conducted by Zubin Mehta, presents Tanglewood's final orchestral concerts. Vadim Repin plays Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto on the first program, which concludes with Mahler's Symphony No. 5. ♦ Aug. 26 at 2:30: Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, featuring the singers Carol Vaness, Jill Grove, Robert Gambill, and John Relyea. (Lenox, Mass. 617-266-1200.)

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA

Aug. 16 at 8, Aug. 19 at 2, and Aug. 25 at 1:30: Handel's "Agrippina," with Alexandra Coku, Beth Clayton, Karen Wierzbka, Derrick Parker, and David Walker; Harry Bicket conducts. ♦ Aug. 17, Aug. 23, and Aug. 25 at 8 and Aug. 20 at 2: Britten's "The Rape of Lucretia," with Michelle DeYoung, Nathan Gunn, Christine Goerke, and William Burden; Stewart Robertson. ♦ Aug. 18 at 1:30 and Aug. 26 and Aug. 28 at 2: Mozart's "Le Nozze di Figaro," with Dean Ely, Joyce Guyer, Nicole Heaston, Valerie Komar, and Christopher Schaldenbrand; George Manahan. ♦ Aug. 18 and Aug. 24 at 8 and Aug. 21 and Aug. 27 at 2: Chabrier's comic opera "L'Étoile," with Torrance Blaisdell, Karina Gauvin, and Christine Abraham; Robertson. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255. These are the final performances.)

BARD MUSIC FESTIVAL:

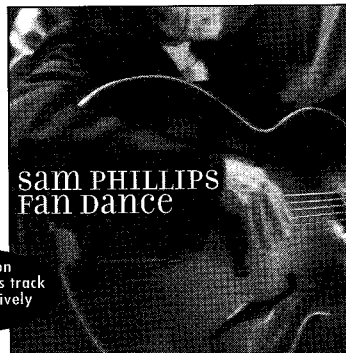
"DEBUSSY AND HIS WORLD"

Debussy's music can entrance us with its surface sensuality, and yet the essence of both his work and his person remains elusive. The festival concludes with five concerts revealing the cultural context of the composer's final years; film screenings, pre-concert talks, and panel discussions with distinguished schol-

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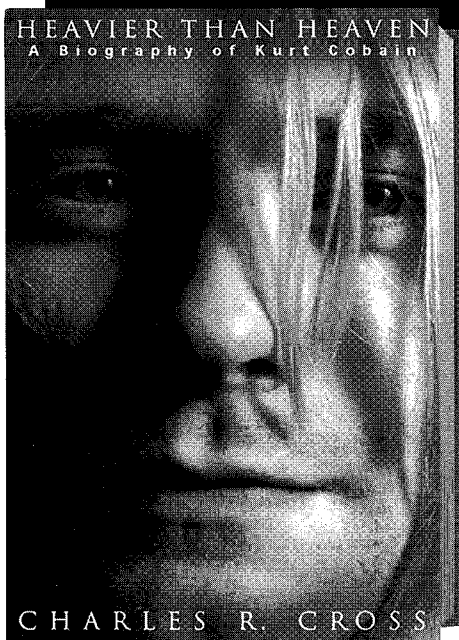
Sam Phillips' first new album in five years features intimate chamber-pop with a noir-tinged literate edge. A record more performed than produced, "Fan Dance" possesses a mysterious beauty: "No hi-gloss, no big splash intended...it is a little salon meant to seduce people one at a time," says its creator.

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ars will also be held. Aug. 17 at 8: "The Lure of the Exotic," a program exploring Debussy's attraction to foreign cultures. In addition to works of his own (such as the "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun," inspired by images from Greek antiquity), the concert includes music from Spain (including a song by Sebastián de Yradier, the author of "La Paloma") and pieces for the Javanese gamelan. ♦ Aug. 18 at 1:30: A selection of music from the cosmopolitan Parisian music scene on the eve of the First World War, including works by Albéniz, Casella, and Stravinsky along with settings of poems by Stéphane Mallarmé, composed by both Debussy and Ravel in 1913 (and sung by the baritone François Le Roux). ♦ Aug. 18 at 8: Leon Botstein conducts the Bard Festival Orchestra in works from Debussy's middle years, including the endlessly engrossing ballet score "Jeux" and the more popular "Images." ♦ Aug. 19 at 1:30: French chamber music from the war years by Satie, Ravel, and Dukas, along with Debussy's three magisterial sonatas for violin and piano; cello and piano; and flute, viola, and harp. The performers include the soprano Dana Hanchard, the pianist Sarah Rothenberg, and the New York Virtuoso Singers. ♦ Aug. 19 at 5: The festival closes with another orchestral program, featuring two rarities, the patriotic cantata "Ode à la France" (from 1917) and the ballet "Khamma," along with "La Mer." (Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. For more information about tickets and other events, call 845-758-3226.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN

Aug. 19 at 3: The St. Petersburg Quartet continues its engagement with a program of Brahms, Shostakovich (the String Quartet No. 13 in B-Flat Minor, one of most harrowing pieces of the last century), and Dohnányi (the Piano Quintet No. 1, with Pamela Mia Paul). ♦ Aug. 26 at 3: Music by Beethoven, Shostakovich (the Quartet No. 7 in F-Sharp Minor), and Schubert (the "Trout" Quintet), performed by the bassist Alvin Brehm, the pianist Frederic Chiu, and the Blair Quartet. (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

TALKING ABOUT A REVOLUTION

A little over a month after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, some twenty thousand redcoats and Hessian troops very nearly put an end to the nascent American uprising. In a matter of hours on August 27, 1776, during the Battle of Brooklyn, at least two of Washington's generals were captured, approximately twelve hundred Americans were killed, and another fifteen hundred Yankees were wounded or captured. On August 18 starting at 1, a couple of hundred Revolutionary War reenactors—complete with period uniforms and canons and horses—mark the two-hundred-and-twenty-fifth anniversary of the engagement by descending upon the Long Meadow in Prospect Park and recreating the battle. At 3 P.M. the action moves down Third Street as the Americans march in retreat to the Old Stone House, on Fifth Avenue, where the battle ends. The following day, from 10 to 4, the reenactors set up camp at Fort Hamilton Park. (For more information, call 718-965-8999.) The following week, on August 25 at 1, John Gallagher, the author of "The Battle of Brooklyn 1776," leads a tour of important battle sites, from Prospect Park to the Old Stone House. (For more information, call 718-788-8500.) Later that day, at 5, Big Onion Walking Tours picks up the story with a walk through lower Manhattan, where Washington and his troops landed after one of the shrewdest moves of the general's career, the nocturnal, fog-enshrouded secret evacuation from Brooklyn Heights after the battle. (For more information, call 439-1090.)

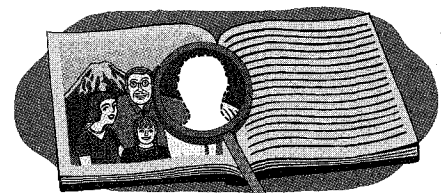
TALK

Aug. 13 at 7:30: Mark Ross, a safari guide and longtime resident of Kenya, discusses his new book, "Dangerous Beauty," which concerns a 1999 tour of Uganda in search of endangered mountain gorillas, during which two of his clients were murdered by Rwandan rebels. Sponsored in part by Amnesty International. (Barnes & Noble, 4 Astor Pl. No tickets necessary.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Without a Trace

Stories of people who disappear are seductive, perhaps because they suggest the possibility of walking quietly into another life. Before setting off on an anthropological expedition to New Guinea in 1961, Michael Rockefeller explained: "It's the desire to do something adventurous at a time when frontiers, in the real sense of the word, are disappearing." Milt Machlin's recently reprinted **THE SEARCH FOR MICHAEL ROCKEFELLER** (Akdine) investigates reports that Rockefeller was killed in revenge for a shooting by a Dutch colonial patrol, that he was eaten



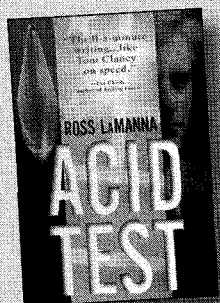
by cannibals, and, most fancifully, that he was alive and being kept, Kurtz-like, as a "captive native god."

The American Jim Thompson, who arrived in Bangkok as an O.S.S. officer at the end of the Second World War and returned to engineer a spectacularly successful revival of the Thai silk industry, was famous even before Easter Sunday of 1967, when he vanished into the jungle of Malaysia's Cameron Highlands. William Warren's **JIM THOMPSON: THE UNSOLVED MYSTERY** (Archipelago) explores the double legend of Thompson's silk company and the unsolved case; in a sense, this was the second disappearance of a man who in his early forties had "abruptly abandoned everything that was familiar to him and moved into a world and a career as exotic as any novelist's creation."

In the late sixties, Americans were leaving familiar lives for less mysterious reasons. In 1969, Jack Todd reported to basic training at Fort Lewis, Washington, where men were "disappearing one or two at a time." **DESERTION: IN THE TIME OF VIETNAM** (Houghton Mifflin) is Todd's memoir of his own decision to flee to Canada, a country where "you have to remind yourself that this is not home, that home is now a place where you can no longer go."

—Nell Freudenberger

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN



SINISTER

Innocent people suddenly transform into homicidal creatures of superhuman strength. A ruthless dictator menaces Europe. And the American president harbors a dark secret. All three intersect in a tale of high-tech weaponry and diabolical medical research.

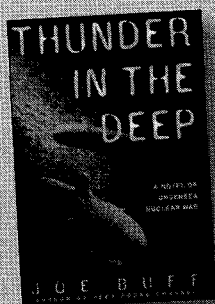
ACID TEST

by Ross LaManna

Pub. Price: \$19.95

Our Price: \$15.96

Readers' Advantage Price: \$14.36



SUBMARINE

An American nuclear submarine receives orders to destroy a lab that is perfecting unstoppable Mach 8 cruise missiles on a bleak north German coast. Just when the captain thinks the mission is accomplished, he confronts the ship of his arch nemesis in a tense undersea battle for survival.

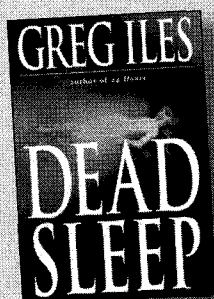
THUNDER IN THE DEEP

by Joe Buff

Pub. Price: \$23.95

Our Price: \$19.16

Readers' Advantage Price: \$17.24



SLEEP

The latest art sensation is a collection of paintings called "The Sleeping Women," canvases featuring female nudes who look asleep. Jordan Glass disagrees. She recognizes the face of her murdered twin sister and embarks on an odyssey to track down the anonymous artist and murderer.

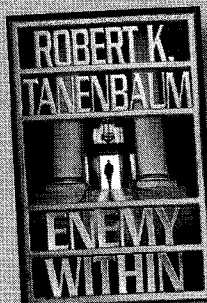
DEAD SLEEP

by Greg Iles

Pub. Price: \$19.95

Our Price: \$15.96

Readers' Advantage Price: \$14.36



STALKER

Up to his neck in the rotting corruption of New York City's finest. Chief Assistant DA Butch Karp is on the trail of a murderer stalking the homeless. The case takes on even greater import when his daughter insists on volunteering in the shelters where the serial killer is most likely lurking.

ENEMY WITHIN

by Robert K. Tanenbaum

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MOVIES OPENING

ABERDEEN

A drama about the relationship between a woman (Lena Headey) and her alcoholic father (Stellan Skarsgård). Opening Aug. 17. (Cinema Village.)

AMERICAN OUTLAWS

Colin Farrell plays Jesse James in this bio-pic directed by Les Mayfield. With Scott Caan and Kathy Bates. Opening Aug. 17.

BROOKLYN BABYLON

Marc Levin ("Slam") directed this drama set in Crown Heights about the budding romance between a Rastafarian rapper and a Hasidic Jew. Opening Aug. 17. (BAM Rose Cinemas.)

BUBBLE BOY

In this comedy, Jake Gyllenhal plays the title character, a boy who travels cross-country in his protective bubble to halt the wedding of his childhood sweetheart. Opening Aug. 24.

CAPTAIN CORELLI'S MANDOLIN

An adaptation of the Louis de Bernières novel set on a Greek island during the Second World War. With Nicolas Cage, Penélope Cruz, and Christian Bale. John Madden directed. Opening Aug. 17.

THE CURSE OF THE JADE SCORPION

Woody Allen's new film is a crime caper set in nineteen-forties New York in which he plays an insurance investigator. With Helen Hunt, Wallace Shawn, and Charlize Theron. Opening Aug. 24.

FIGHTER

A documentary about two contentious old friends, Arnost Lustig and Jan Wiener, who travel to Europe to retrace Wiener's escape from Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia. Opening Aug. 24. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

HAMLET

An adaptation of the play, with Campbell Scott directing and starring. Opening Aug. 17. (The Screening Room.)

HAPPY ACCIDENTS

A romantic comedy with Marisa Tomei and Vincent D'Onofrio, written and directed by Brad Anderson. Opening Aug. 24.

INNOCENCE

Paul Cox directed this drama in which a retired music teacher (Charles Tingwell) searches for his first love (Julia Blake), fifty years after their wartime affair. Opening Aug. 17. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

JAY & SILENT BOB STRIKE BACK

A comedy written and directed by Kevin Smith which sends the two convenience-store stoners on a mission to Hollywood. Lots of cameos, including appearances by Chris Rock, Ben Affleck, and Shannen Doherty. Opening Aug. 22.

JOHN CARPENTER'S GHOST OF MARS

A colony on the Red Planet must be saved from Martian attack in this action movie with Ice Cube, Natasha Henstridge, and Pam Grier. Opening Aug. 24.

LISA PICARD IS "FAMOUS"

Griffin Dunne directed this mockumentary about aspiring actors in New York City. Nat DeWolf and Laura Kirk wrote the script and play the leads. Opening Aug. 22. (Film Forum.)

MAYBE BABY

A comedy about a British couple's struggle to conceive, written and directed by Ben Elton. With Emma Thompson. Opening Aug. 24.

RAT RACE

Jerry Zucker directed this comedy in which a casino owner lures six contestants into a race for two million dollars. With Cuba Gooding, Jr., Jon Lovitz, Whoopi Goldberg, John Cleese, and others. Opening Aug. 17.

SUMMER CATCH

A wealthy girl (Jessica Biel) vacationing on Cape Cod falls in love with a local boy (Freddie Prinze, Jr.) who dreams of becoming a professional baseball player. Directed by Michael Tollin. Opening Aug. 24.

TELL ME SOMETHING

A burned-out cop tries to redeem himself by solving a cold case in this thriller directed by Chang Youn-hyun. In Korean. Opening Aug. 24. (Cinema Village.)



TOGETHER

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Aug. 24. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

TORTILLA SOUP

A retelling of Ang Lee's comedy "Eat Drink Man Woman" with a Hispanic family in Los Angeles. The cast includes Raquel Welch, Hector Elizondo, and Tamara Mello. Directed by Maria Ripoll. Opening Aug. 24.

FILM NOTES

AMERICAN PIE 2

More humiliating sex adventures from America's favorite dumb-dumb teens. In this one, they allegedly take the next step into adulthood, but the material seems more infantile and antierotic than ever. It's amazing that actual teen-agers accept this picture of themselves and don't throw popcorn or something worse at the screen. With Jason Biggs, showing some

scornfully reciting a passage from *Time* magazine, and, most affecting, more time on the boat with Chef (Frederic Forrest), Lance (Sam Bottoms), Clean (Laurence Fishburne), and Chief (Albert Hall). There is still plenty amiss with this picture—indigestible lumps of intellectual residue and the uneasy suspicion that Kurtz's kingdom is nothing worse than a T. S. Eliot study group gone terribly wrong. But there is so much to set against that, beginning with the deep *thugga-thugga* heartbeat of the choppers in the opening seconds. Walter Murch got an Oscar for Best Sound, and his work remains unsurpassed; take a friend who is visually impaired to this movie and he or she will get things out of it which you can barely imagine.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 8/6/01.) (Astor Plaza and Lincoln Square.)

BAND OF OUTSIDERS

This 1964 Jean-Luc Godard film is like a reverie of a gangster movie as students in an espresso bar might remember it or plan it. It has the gangster-film virtues (loyalty, daring), but they are mixed with innocence, amorality, lack of equilibrium. Godard re-creates the gangsters and the moll with *his* world of associations—seeing them as people in a Paris café, mixing them with Rimbaud, Kafka, and Alice in Wonderland. In French.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; Aug. 17-28.)

THE BIG HEAT

Sidney Boehm's solid, hard-nosed script might have been made into a routine cops-and-robbers thriller, but the director, Fritz Lang, gave it a formalized style. This 1953 movie is all of a piece; it's designed in light and shadows, and its underworld atmosphere glistens with the possibilities of sadism—this is a definitive film noir, with a few stunningly choreographed nasty scenes.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; Aug. 24-25.)

BULLY

Larry Clark's new movie is based on events that took place near Fort Lauderdale in 1993, when a group of teens plotted the murder of an abusive older boy. Clark doesn't bother with the kind of square sociological "understanding" which made fifties juvenile-delinquent movies so lugubrious; he gets in bed with the teen-agers and stays there, recreating the erotic, druggy stupor and the brainless fantasies of bored, disaffected teens. The movie is



At Anthology Film Archives, the Korean box-office hit "Joint Security Area."

comic style as the stumbling Jim, and Chris Klein, Seann William Scott, Mena Suvari, and Eugene Levy.—*David Denby* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, Union Square, and Waverly.)

APOCALYPSE NOW REDUX

The horror is back, and this time it's even longer. Francis Ford Coppola recut his 1979 film and added forty-nine minutes. We get a dinner party for Willard (Martin Sheen) at a French plantation, the reappearance of the Playboy Bunnies, Kurtz (Marlon Brando)

pitiless and derisive—closer, at its best, to hip black comedy than to tragedy. The mangy haplessness of dumb teen-agers is exactly what eroticizes them for Clark, and he doesn't, for all his intimate contact, tell us why violence is their only way out. A fascinating but enraging movie. With Nick Stahl, Brad Renfro, and Rachel Miner.—*D.D.* (7/30/01) (Angelika Film Center.)

THE DEEP END

A heartfelt and beautifully made neo-noir thriller that takes its moods and colors from the turquoise blue of Lake Tahoe. A mother of three, Margaret

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(Tilda Swinton), discovers a dead body outside her family's lakeside home one morning. It is her teen-age son's gay lover, a Reno club owner and lowlife, and Margaret sets about disposing of the corpse as if it were a particularly cumbersome household nuisance. This domestic heroine gets drawn deeper and deeper into secrecy and danger while running around taking her children to their lessons. The movie, which is beautifully shot by Giles Nuttgens, develops rhapsodic and fatalistic moods that hold you even when the story becomes improbable. With Jonathan Tucker as the son with whom Margaret has a largely silent bond, and Goran Visnjic as a sad-eyed, melan-

rocker, tours the dives of America in pursuit of her gorgeous, successful former protégé (Michael Pitt). Her band is called the Angry Inch (which also refers to the result of a botched sex-change operation), and her story unwinds in a series of monologues and rocking stage performances. Mitchell's confident, nonpandering direction brings out cheeky performances from his actors, and songwriter Stephen Trask's tunes, worthy of Bowie at his gender-bending best, wrap the film in loving, outré fashion.—*Bruce Diones* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

anyone passing from room to room must shut one door before opening the next. The electricity is out, and the house is covered in fog. One rather misses a beast howling on the moors or a madwoman in the attic, but there are voices, many voices, and the servants make creepy remarks. The Spanish director Alejandro Amenábar works by suggestion much of the time: he favors ambiguity rather than outright horrors, and the sepulchral gray light of the house and grounds can be elegant. But the movie becomes monotonous; it's like a sluggish computer game in which movement is limited to one room at a time.—*D.D.* (8/13/01) (Battery Park



At BAM Rose Cinemas, "Brooklyn Babylon," a contemporary Solomon-and-Sheba tale with Tariq Trotter and Karen Goberman.

choly blackmailer whom she perversely finds attractive. Written, directed, and produced by the team of Scott McGehee and David Siegel.—*D.D.* (8/13/01) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

GHOST WORLD

Two strip-mall Savonarolas, Enid (Thora Birch) and Rebecca (Scarlett Johansson), gaze with disgust at the fallen world around them. Terry Zwigoff's movie is based on Daniel Clowes's cartoon novel, which he and Clowes adapted. For a while, "Ghost World" seems to be a new type of dyspeptic comedy, acid yet tender. Zwigoff's sense of visual elegance gives clarity and snap to material that might have fallen into a crabby nowhere-ville. But the movie loses its cool. It zeroes in on Enid's unhappiness, and she begins to seem like a typical teen-ager who makes jokes to cover her pain and who needs to grow up. See it for Birch's hostile stare and Johansson's devastating monotone. With Steve Buscemi as a nominal adult who collects vintage blues seventies.—*D.D.* (8/6/01) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH

Trash perfection. Flamboyant costumes, lollipop colors, and glam-rock music come together explosively in John Cameron Mitchell's movie adaptation of his Off Broadway hit. Hedwig, a transsexual

JURASSIC PARK III

A further rematch of *Homo sapiens* versus the velociraptor, with honors fairly even by the end. The raptor has longer teeth and, we now learn, more refined social skills, but man has the satellite phone. After an absence of one movie, Dr. Alan Grant (Sam Neill) returns to a dino-packed island with a bullish assistant (Alessandro Nivola) and a couple of lily-livered adventurers (William H. Macy and Téa Leoni). The result, directed not by Steven Spielberg but by Joe Johnston, is the most streamlined installment of the franchise so far. For your money, you get no ethics lectures, not much science, and a handful of half-baked characters; everything is set, in other words, for a spirited game of chase-and-chew. Isn't that why you bought a ticket in the first place?—*A.L.* (7/23/01) (Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE OTHERS

Nicole Kidman, with a hairdo that makes her look like a red-headed Grace Kelly, plays an upper-class Englishwoman living in a big house on Jersey at the end of the Second World War. Her husband is off fighting, and her two small children are so sensitive to light that the curtains must always be drawn and

16, Coronet Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

PLANET OF THE APES

The apes are pretty terrific, especially Tim Roth as General Thade, a simian Fascist in samurai armor. They leap and roar like very active animals, not like actors in hoods. The director Tim Burton uses his patented black-on-black color palette, and the great cinematographer Philippe Rousselot puts a gleam into the ebony images. But if the movie's production skills are extraordinary, its dramatic skills are pathetic. Burton and his screenwriters never capture the grand sense of myth which made the original 1968 version so haunting. Even routine plot details are impossibly vague. Mark Wahlberg is vague, too. He doesn't have enough expression in his face to carry a movie alone, and "Apes" devolves into pointless chases and battles.—*D.D.* (8/6/01) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia I and II, 62nd and Broadway, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

SEXY BEAST

A tale of expatriate Cockneys, dry-roasted by the Spanish sun and determined to get England off their backs. Gal (Ray Winstone), once a crook, and his wife, Deedee (Amanda Redman), once a porno

BLAIR DAWSON

star, have retired to the Costa del Sol; now they are tracked down by an old acquaintance, Don (Ben Kingsley), who invites Gal back home for one last crime. Jonathan Glazer, the young British director making his debut feature, turns the first half of the picture into a cool study of hotheads, saturated with creative cursing; the second half, which finds Gal returning to London, stumbles and slides into the grim traditions of gangsterland. But the movie needs to be seen for its clean compositions, its sure touch of fantasy, and, above all, for the forbidding presence of Kingsley—the prince of darkness, lightly disguised as a human being.—*A.L.* (6/18 & 25/01) (Battery Park 16, 59th Street East Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Union Square.)

SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS

Even the presence of those two guarantors of box-office success, Tony Curtis and Burt Lancaster, did not lift this 1957 picture from the red ink. This is understandable, because the movie is a slice of perversity—a study of dollar and power worship, with Lancaster as a Broadway gossip columnist and Curtis as an ingratiating, blackmailing press agent. Clifford Odets never came through more pungently as a screenwriter; his distinctively idiomatic dialogue is harshly expressive and taut. The director, Alexander Mackendrick, has a crisp film-noir style: the production is shaped by a zest for the corrupt milieu, the pulsating big-city life (what used to be called “the symphony of a city”)—the streets, the night clubs, the cynical types, the noise and desperation.—*P.K.* (Museum of Modern Art; Aug. 26-27.)

THE TURANDOT PROJECT

In 1997, the conductor Zubin Mehta and the film director Zhang Yimou collaborated on a new production of Puccini's last opera, “Turandot,” in Florence, and then transported the entire affair to Beijing, where they restaged it in a courtyard within the Forbidden City. Thousands of people all over China embroidered authentic Ming-era costumes, and Zhang filled the stage with dancers in blazing color and costumed soldiers. “Turandot” can take this kind of inflation—it's a story of inhumanity that depends on public triumphs and humiliations. Most of Mehta's talk about “authenticity,” however, is amusingly beside the point, since Puccini was about as Western as they come, and “Turandot,” for all its “Chinese” orchestration, stays well within the conventions of Italian opera. The documentary filmmaker Allan Miller caught both the rehearsals and the finished productions.—*D.D.* (Lincoln Plaza and Quad Cinemas.)

WET HOT AMERICAN SUMMER

Michael Showalter and David Wain of the sketch-comedy group the State wrote and directed this hilarious coming-of-age marathon set at Camp Firewood, Maine, in August, 1981—a time when pulled-up white socks could be worn safely. What's impressive here is the pace; by cramming an entire summer of pranks, hookups, defeats, and comebacks into a single day, Wain and Showalter keep the jokes zipping along. Janeane Garofalo, David Hyde Pierce, Paul Rudd, Molly Shannon, and the other actors ham it up for laughs with a raunchiness tempered by deadpan earnestness. Best are the throwaway moments, such as when a Kenyan runner appears out of nowhere and sprints past everyone in capture the flag.—*Michael Agger* (Empire 25 and Village East Cinemas.)

ALSO PLAYING

A.I. (7/2/01)

Battery Park 16, Coronet Cinema, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.

ALL OVER THE GUY

Chelsea Cinemas and Quad Cinema.

AN AMERICAN RHAPSODY

First & 62nd Cinemas and Quad Cinema.

AMERICA'S SWEETHEARTS (7/30/01)

Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square.

DIVIDED WE FALL

Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

LEGALLY BLONDE (7/16/01)

Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Union Square, and Waverly.

LUMUMBA

Film Forum.

RUSH HOUR 2

Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, Sutton 1 and 2, Union Square, and Waverly.

SESSION 9

Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.

Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.

BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.

Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St. (945-3418).

Beckman, Second Ave. at 66th St.

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.

Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.

Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.

Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.

Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).

Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.

East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.

East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.

84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.

Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.

Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).

First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.

42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.

Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.

Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.

Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.

New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.

19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.

Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.

Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.

Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.

Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.

The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).

72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.

64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.

State, Broadway at 45th St.

Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.

Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.

Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.

Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600).

Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Wednesdays, starting at dusk: Free outdoor movies at the Socrates Sculpture Park (Broadway at Vernon Blvd.), in Queens. The feature on Aug. 15 is “The Italian” (1915, Reginald Barker). ♦ Through Sept. 9: “Hollywood on the Home Front: American Film in the 1940's.” Aug. 18 at 2: “Boomerang!” (1947, Elia Kazan). ♦ Aug. 18 at 4: “The Stranger” (1946, Orson Welles). ♦ Aug. 19 at 2: “Mildred Pierce” (1945, Michael Curtiz). ♦ Aug. 19 at 4:30:

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"The Lady from Shanghai" (1948, Welles). ♦ Aug. 25 at 2: "Meet Me in St. Louis" (1944, Vincente Minnelli). ♦ Aug. 25 at 4:30: "The Clock" (1945, Minnelli). ♦ Aug. 26 at 2: "All the King's Men" (1949, Robert Rossen). ♦ Aug. 26 at 4: "The Senator Was Indiscreet" (1947, George S. Kaufman). ♦ Repertory nights. Aug. 18-19 at 6:30: "The Trial" (1962, Welles). ♦ Aug. 25-26 at 6:30: "The 400 Blows" (1959, François Truffaut; in French).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Through Aug. 26: "When Korean Cinema Attacks!" All films are in Korean. Aug. 17 at 7:30: "Tell Me Something" (1999, Chang Yoon-hyun). ♦ Aug. 17 at 10, Aug. 20 at 9:30, and Aug. 26 at 9:30: "Attack the Gas Station" (1999, Kim Sang-jin). ♦ Aug. 18 at 4 and Aug. 26 at 4:30: "Christmas in August" (1998, Hur Jin-ho). ♦ Aug. 18 at 6:30 and Aug. 25 at 8:15: "Memento Mori" (1999, Kim Tae-yong and Min Kyu-dong). ♦ Aug. 18 at 8:30, Aug. 21 at 9:30, and Aug. 24 at 11: "Joint Security Area" (2000, Park Chan-wook). ♦ Aug. 18 at 11, Aug. 23 at 7, and Aug. 26 at 7: "Barking Dogs Never Bite" (2000, Bong Jun-ho). ♦ Aug. 19 at 5 and Aug. 21 at 7: "My Heart" (1999, Bae Chung-ho). ♦ Aug. 19 at 7:30, Aug. 22 at 9:30, and Aug. 24 at 8:30: "The Foul King" (2000, Kim Ji-woon). ♦ Aug. 19 at 10, Aug. 23 at 9:30, and Aug. 25 at 6: "The Isle" (2000, Kim Ki-duk). ♦ Aug. 20 at 7 and Aug. 25 at 3:30: "Art Museum by the Zoo" (1998, Lee Jeong-hyang). ♦ Aug. 22 at 7, Aug. 24 at 6, and Aug. 25 at 10:30: "An Affair" (1998, Lee Jae-young).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (777-3456)—Through Aug. 31: Seven decades of cinema from Portugal. All films are in Portuguese. Aug. 15-16 at 6:50 and 9:10: Short-film programs. ♦ Aug. 17 at 2 and 6:50: "Mudar de Vida" (1966, Paulo Rocha). ♦ Aug. 18 at 2 and 6:50: "Casa de Lava" (1994, Pedro Costa). ♦ Aug. 19 at 2 and 6:50: "Alex" (1991, Teresa Villaverde). ♦ Aug. 23 at 6:50: More short films. ♦ Aug. 24 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Recollections of the Yellow House" (1989, João César Monteiro). ♦ Aug. 25 at 4:30 and 9: "In Vanda's Room" (2000, Costa). ♦ Aug. 26 at 4 and 8: "Abraham Valley" (1993, Manoel de Oliveira). ♦ The films of Gregg Araki. Aug. 20 at 4:30 and 6:50: "The Living End" (1992). ♦ Aug. 27 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Three Bewildered People in the Night" (1987). ♦ A tribute to the director Guy Maddin. Aug. 21 at 4:30 and 6:50: "Heart of the World" (2000) and "Archangel" (1990). ♦ Aug. 28 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Tales from the Gimli Hospital" (1988). ♦ Film discussions with Elliott Stein. Aug. 22 at 6: "The Razor's Edge" (1946, Edmund Goulding). ♦ Movies in Fort Greene Park. Aug. 14 at 8:30: "Kirikou and the Sorceress" (1998, Michel Ocelot; in French). ♦ Aug. 21 at 8:30: "Rush Hour" (1998, Brett Ratner).

BRYANT PARK

Sixth Ave. at 42nd St.—Mondays, starting at dusk: Free drive-in-style moviegoing. The feature on Aug. 20 is "An American in Paris" (1951, Vincente Minnelli).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Oct. 4: "N.Y.P.D.," an eight-week festival of New York City crime movies. Aug. 15 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20: "Pay or Die!" (1960, Richard Wilson). ♦ Aug. 15 at 3, 6:40, and 10:20: "The Mob" (1951, Robert Parrish). ♦ Aug. 16 at 1:20, 4:40, and 8: "Side Street" (1949, Anthony Mann). ♦ Aug. 16 at 2:55, 6:15, and 9:35: "Cop Hater" (1958, William A. Berke). ♦ Aug. 17-19 at 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10: "The Taking of Pelham 123" (1974, Joseph Sargent). ♦ Aug. 21 at 3:40 and 7:40: "Report to the Commissioner" (1975, Milton Katselas). ♦ Aug. 21 at 1:45, 5:45, and 9:45: "Across 110th Street" (1972, Barry Shear). ♦ Aug. 22-23 at 1, 4:25, and 7:50: "Bullets or Ballots" (1936, William Keighley). ♦ Aug. 22-23 at 2:50, 6:15, and 9:40: "Sergeant Madden" (1939, Josef von Sternberg). ♦ Aug. 24-25 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20: "The Big Heat" (†). ♦ Aug. 24-25 at 2:40, 6:20, and 10: "Rogue Cop" (1954, Roy Rowland). ♦ Aug. 26 at 2:45, 6:15, and 9:45: "The Naked City" (1948, Jules Dassin). ♦ Aug. 26 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "Cry of the City" (1948, Robert Siodmak). ♦ Aug. 28 at 2:45, 6:15, and 9:45: "Who Killed Teddy Bear?" (1965, Joseph Cates). ♦ Aug. 28 at 1, 4:30, and 8:

"God Told Me To" (1977, Larry Cohen). ♦ Mondays through Oct. 1: Buster Keaton classics. Aug. 20 at 2, 4:45, 7:30, and 10:15: "Steamboat Bill, Jr." (1928). ♦ Aug. 20 at 3:25, 6:10, and 8:55: "One Week" (1920), "Neighbors" (1920), and "The Balloonatic" (1923). ♦ Aug. 27 at 2, 4:45, 7:30, and 10:15: "Our Hospitality" (1923). ♦ Aug. 27 at 3:25, 6:10, and 8:55: "The Goat" (1921), "The Scarecrow" (1920), and "The High Sign" (1921). ♦ Starting Aug. 17 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10: "Band of Outsiders" (†).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through Sept. 7: A retrospective of the cinematography of James Wong Howe (1899-1976). Aug. 16 at 3:30 and Aug. 19 at 5: "Pursued" (1947, Raoul Walsh). ♦ Aug. 16 at 6 and Aug. 18 at 2: "Viva Villa!" (1934, Jack Conway). ♦ Aug. 17 at 3:30: "Hangmen Also Die!" (1943, Fritz Lang). ♦ Aug. 17 at 6 and Aug. 18 at 5: "Air Force" (1943, Howard Hawks). ♦ Aug. 17 at 8:15 and Aug. 19 at 2: "Objective, Burma!" (1945, Raoul Walsh). ♦ Aug. 20 at 3:30 and Aug. 21 at 6: "Yankee Doodle Dandy" (1942, Michael Curtiz). ♦ Aug. 20 at 6 and Aug. 21 at 3:30: "Passage to Marseille" (1944, Curtiz). ♦ Aug. 23 at 3:30 and Aug. 24 at 8: "Body and Soul" (1947, Robert Rossen). ♦ Aug. 23 at 6 and Aug. 25 at 5: "The Brave Bulls" (1951, Rossen). ♦ Aug. 24 at 3:30 and Aug. 25 at 2: "The Baron of Arizona" (1950, Samuel Fuller). ♦ Aug. 24 at 6 and Aug. 26 at 2: "He Ran All the Way" (1951, John Berry). ♦ Aug. 26 at 5 and Aug. 27 at 3:30: "Sweet Smell of Success" (†). ♦ Aug. 27 at 6 and Aug. 28 at 3:30: "The Rose Tattoo" (1955, Daniel Mann). ♦ Aug. 28 at 6: "The Old Man and the Sea" (1959, John Sturges).

THE MUSEUM OF TELEVISION & RADIO

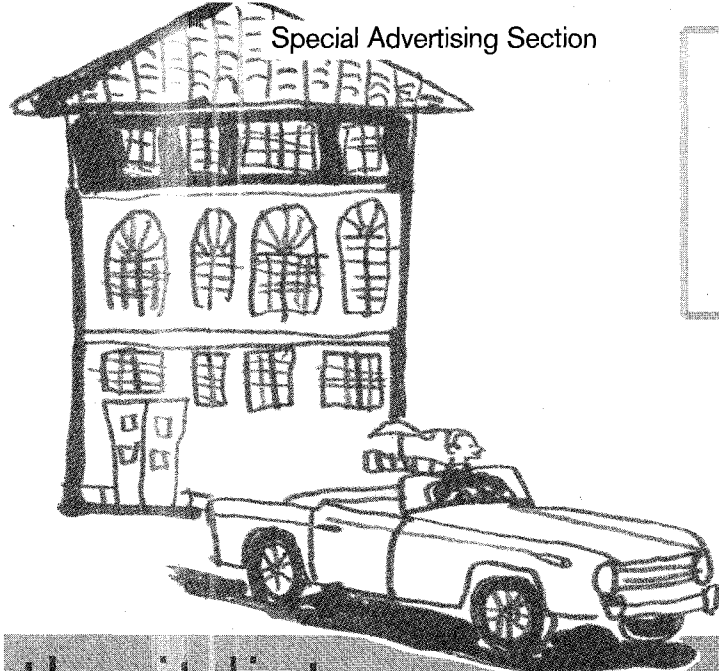
25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through Sept. 16: "Hello, Goodbye," screenings of pilots, premières, and final episodes of classic television shows. Thursdays through Sundays at 3.

THE SCREENING ROOM

54 Varick St. (334-2100)—Starting Aug. 24 at 3:30, 5:45, 8, and 10:15: "Monterey Pop" (1969, D. A. Pennebaker).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Sept. 5: "Latin Beat 2001," recent films from Latin America. Unless otherwise noted, all films are in Spanish. Aug. 15 at 1: "Viva Cepeda!" (1999, Mario Díaz) and "A Soccer Story" (2000, Paulo Machline; in Portuguese). ♦ Aug. 15 at 2:30, Aug. 18 at 4:45, and Aug. 21 at 9: "25 Watts" (2001, Juan Pablo Rebella and Pablo Stoll). ♦ Aug. 15 at 4:30 and Aug. 18 at 1 and 6:45: "Violet Perfume" (2001, Marysa Sistach). ♦ Aug. 15 at 6:30 and 9: "That Latin Beat," a short history of Latin music in the U.S. ♦ Aug. 16 at 1:30 and 9:30: "How to Create a Rumba" (1999, Iván Acosta). ♦ Aug. 16 at 3:15, Aug. 17 at 5, and Aug. 18 at 8:45: "Inheritance" (2001, Paula Hernández). ♦ Aug. 17 at 1, Aug. 19 at 5:40, and Aug. 20 at 9: "The Sentimental Teaser" (1999, Cristian Galaz). ♦ Aug. 17 at 3 and 7:30 and Aug. 19 at 9:15: "Posthumous Memories" (1999, André Klotzel; in Portuguese). ♦ Aug. 17 at 9:45, Aug. 20 at 12:30, and Aug. 22 at 9: "Cuba Feliz" (2000, Karim Dridi). ♦ Aug. 18 at 3 and Aug. 19 at 7:30: "Urbana" (2001, Flavio Frederico; in Portuguese). ♦ Aug. 21 at 12:30 and Aug. 26 at 7:45: "The Waiting List" (2000, Juan Carlos Tabio). ♦ Aug. 22 at 12:30, Aug. 25 at 8, and Aug. 27 at 8:30: "A Breakfast Chronicle" (2000, Benjamin Cann). ♦ Aug. 23 at 12:30, Aug. 24 at 9:15, and Aug. 26 at 3: "Van Van, Let's Party!" (2000, Liliana Mazure and Aaron Vega). ♦ Aug. 23 at 9:15 and Aug. 24 at 1: "Cuba, Island of Music" (2000, Gary Keys; in English and Spanish). ♦ Aug. 24 at 3, Aug. 25 at 5:45, and Aug. 27 at 6:15: "Possible Loves" (2000, Sandra Werneck; in Portuguese). ♦ Aug. 24 at 5:15: "Florentino and the Devil" (1995, Michael New). ♦ Aug. 24 at 7 and Aug. 26 at 9:45: "Just for Today" (2000, Ariel Rotter). ♦ Aug. 25 at 3 and Aug. 27 at 3:15: "Black Tears" (1997, Sonia Herman Dolz). ♦ Aug. 26 at 5 and Aug. 27 at 1: "Time Out" (1998, Sergio Cabrera). ♦ Aug. 28 at 1: "Ratas, Ratones, Rateros" (1999, Sebastián Cordero). ♦ Aug. 28 at 3:15: "The Dog's Will" (1999, Guel Arraes; in Portuguese). ♦ Movies for kids. Aug. 25-26 at 1: "Manuelita" (1999, Manuel García Ferré). ♦ Independents Night. Aug. 16 at 6:30: "5 Girls" (2001, Maria Finitzo).



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BY EVE ZIBART

Panache is persuasive and it tends to inspire the very best in service. Whether your fantasy is Old World, old money, retro, metro, or simply luxury from the get-go, the sweep and spirit of your next getaway will be only as intoxicating as is its style.

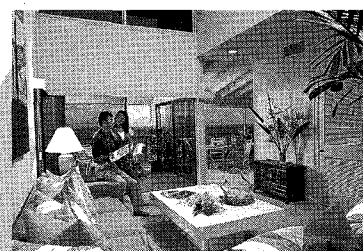
RIDE IN STYLE **The Colonnade** (www.etontownhouse.com) is a London townhouse hotel in Little Venice where you can sleep in JFK's four-poster (or on Freud's couch). Four night's accommodation comes with two day's use of a **vintage sports coupe** (a 1961 Porsche Speedster and 1967 TR4A among them), along with a left-side-of-the-road driving lesson and a pair of snappy driving gloves. Or rent an Aston Martin or a Bentley from **Eurostyle** (www.eurostyle.uk.com) and run up for the weekend to **Stapleford Park** (www.stapleford.co.uk), the quintessential English country estate, for a bit of falconry, fishing, horseback riding, or golf. Ask for a lesson from their pro, European Ryder Cup Captain Sam Torrance.

NEO AESTHETICS Berlin is so high on its own architectural wealth—an astonishing mix of lavish neoclassical, Art Nouveau and super-modern—that many of its hotels are taking the next logical step and serving as live-in art galleries. The sleek, white-on-white **Art'otel Berlin-Mitte** (www.artotel.de)

was designed as a showcase for expressionist artist Georg Baselitz. The similarly minimalist **Dorint am Gendarmenmarkt** (www.dorint.de) has adjustable color lighting and pull cords on the headrests that elicit lullabies. The eccentric (and inexpensive) **Propeller Island City Lodge** (www.propeller-island.com) was designed by avant-garde artist Lars Stroschen. Each room of the **Hotel Kunstlerheim Luise** (www.kuenstheim-luise.de) was decorated by a different German artist.

HERE COMES THE SUN Stretch out in the Tuscan sun amid the extensive holdings of the Antinori wine-making family in Tuscany. A rambling centuries-old stone farmhouse, **Podere Tignanello**, has sweeping views of the vineyards where Antinori's renowned Tignanello wine (www.fontedemedici.com) is produced—and yes, there are tastings. The farmhouse is massive, and its half-dozen apartments—each of which sleep up to six—come with fireplaces and modern kitchens. Their other estate, **Podere Vivaio**, is set on a hill that overlooks Lake Buca del Granchio and comes with a pool and tennis courts. Aussie chums Nicole Kidman and Russell Crowe were spotted at the thirteen-hundred-dollar-a-night **Wakaya Club** (www.wakaya.com) in Fiji recently. This

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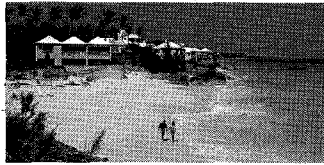
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very private island is known for its powder-soft beaches, lush tropical forests, and stunning waterfalls. The island of Praslin in the Seychelles (an archipelago of about 115 islands a thousand miles east of Kenya) has a new idyll: the **Lémuria Resort** (www.lemuriareport.com). It's named after the legendary lost continent of Lémuria (not to be confused with Atlantis), of which the Seychelles are supposed to have once been a part. For even more privacy—and that lost continent feel—try tiny **Villas Chez Batista's** (www.elegantdestinations.co.uk), an eight-room, white-sand hideaway on the south coast of the island of Mahe. Batista's started out as a restaurant, so expect the best in dining. Those looking for North African exotic can try **Palais Jamaï** (resa@palais-jamai.co.ma), a one-time royal residence in Fes, Morocco, located near the city's old Medina. Also in Fes, **The Arabesque** (www.arabesquehotel.com), a jewel box of a hotel, has its own lavish gardens and two equally lovely restaurants.

HOME STYLE Lovers of Creole cuisine should be hot on the trail of New Orleans' **Lafayette Hotel** (www.nolacollection.com) and its "Lemonade Special." Two days of feasting includes dinner at Susan Spicer's Herbsaint restaurant on one night, Creole staple Broussard's on the other, a cooking class, and room service with iced Jack Daniel's lemonade coolers. Vacation like a robber baron at the historic Adirondack landmark, **The Point** (www.thepointresort.com), an eleven-room log cabin built by William Avery Rockefeller on the shores of upstate New York's Upper Saranac Lake. The bill is paid in advance, after which, everything—meals, tips, use of sports equipment, even wine or liquor from the twenty-four-hour bars—is discretely taken care of.

ONLY FOR SWINGERS The ultra-luxury golf destination, Relais & Chateaux's **Madison Resort in Carmelo, Uruguay** (www.madisonresort.com), sports a par-72 championship golf course designed by



Kelly Blake Moran who was lead architect of the 2000 World Cup at the Jockey Club in Buenos Aires. Two-night packages that include villa, breakfast, and greens fees are \$310 per person through the end of the year. Now that both Quantas and Air New Zealand fly direct from Los Angeles to Auckland, you can indulge your cravings for those crisp sauvignon blancs at **Kauri Cliffs in Matauri Bay** (www.kauricliffs.com), an eight-cottage, sixteen-suite complex with an eighteen-hole course overlooking the Pacific.

SPA GETAWAYS **The Four Seasons Resort Kuda Huraa** (www.fourseasons.com) in the Maldives off the southern tip of India sets a new standard for relaxation. Sail to its island spa, with ocean views from all vantage points and portholes in the floors for viewing the ocean's depths. Or get away to **Victoria-Jung frau Grand Hotel Interlaken** in the Swiss Mountains (www.victoria-jungfrau.ch). A six-night stay, includes two full-body treatments for less than two thousand dollars. Right before the holidays it's even cheaper.



CRUISING AROUND Check out **Holland America's** eleven-night October cruise from Venice to Barcelona (\$1,799; www.hollandamerica.com); or **Radisson Seven Seas Cruises'** seven-night spin on French Polynesia from (\$1,595; www.rssc.com). **Crystal Cruises** (www.crystalcruises.com) is touting a 2002 Value Collection to such diverse destinations as the Panama Canal, Hawaii, and the Caribbean at more than half off regular fares. Packages start as low as two hundred dollars a day.

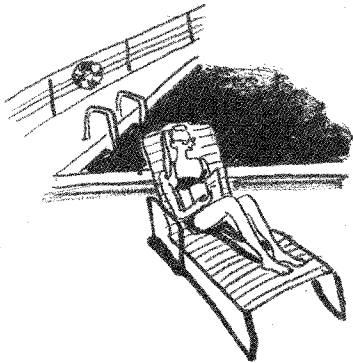
WONDERS ON THE WEB On-line travel agencies don't necessarily get you the best deal. Many of these sites simply direct you to offers that get them the best commissions. They also track your spending habits. **Orbitz** (www.orbitz.com), a site co-founded by five major airlines, does its job differently. They simply search on all flights available for the

NEWS BRIEFS

Why settle for the typical tourist jaunt in Beijing, when **Aaron Travel** can set you up to tour the real city and arrange tickets for the unique Forbidden City International Jazz Festival, October 9-14. . . . Ischia, an island in the Bay of Naples, is probably best-known to Americans as the setting for "The Talented Mr. Ripley." **Stay & Visit Italy** uses this popular destination for Europeans as a home base for its seven-day thermal spa tour. . . . What's next in France? **Auto France**, which leases spanking nouveau Peugeots, is reporting increased traffic south of Bordeaux to the relatively pristine southwestern coast. . . . **Farnum & Christ** offers privately owned flats and cottages in London, where there is a proliferation of new five-star restaurants. . . . Located just north of Dallas, Plano is one of Texas' fastest growing cities and it's also the hot air balloon capital. The twenty-second annual **Plano Balloon Festival** takes place September 21-23. . . . Cookbook author

Hiroko Shimbo Beitchman leads **Hiroko's Kitchen** culinary tour of Japan, November 8-19. . . . **TravLtips'** South Pacific island package takes you from Tahiti to the Marquesas on a hundred passenger ship, Aranui. . . . **Theatre Guild** has assembled an all-star cast for its Theatre at Sea cruise (May 27-June 10, 2002) on Cunard's luxury liner *Coronia*, which visits such exotic Mediterranean ports of call as Rhodes, and Kusadasi, Turkey. . . . **Kapalua Villas** in Maui reports an increasingly popular pineapple plantation tour that explores early twentieth-century Hawaiian culture. . . . Need travel trimmings? **Blue Street Designs** has custom-designed sea-grass and velvet travel hats that pack down perfectly. And **Accessories from France** offers a variety of French-designed tapestry handbags loomed in Europe by the traditional jacquard method.

time you'd like to travel, and let you pick the best deal yourself. Many of their offers are Web-exclusive. A "One More Night" campaign through the end of the year by **Leading Hotels of the World** (www.lhw.com) promises to provide a fourth night free on a three-day stay. Among the more than a hundred hotels participating are the luxurious Dorchester in London, Hôtel de Paris in Monte Carlo, and The Breakers in Palm Beach.



ITEMS TO DECLARE Plan your next trip with the stylish **Hip Hotels** books by Herbert Ypma, published by Thames & Hudson. Lush photographs of hotel interiors and nearby sights permit you to evaluate where you can best spend the night. The de rigueur accessory is a **dual-time zone wristwatch** available from Jaeger-le Coultre, Patek Philippe, and Rolex (www.tourneau.com). The sports equipment to flaunt is a **custom-made bamboo fly rod** by such masters as John Bradford, Ted Simroe, and Gary Lacey. Go to www.codella.com to view stunning examples of their work.

(Eve Zibart is a staff reporter for the Washington Post and author of several travel guides.)

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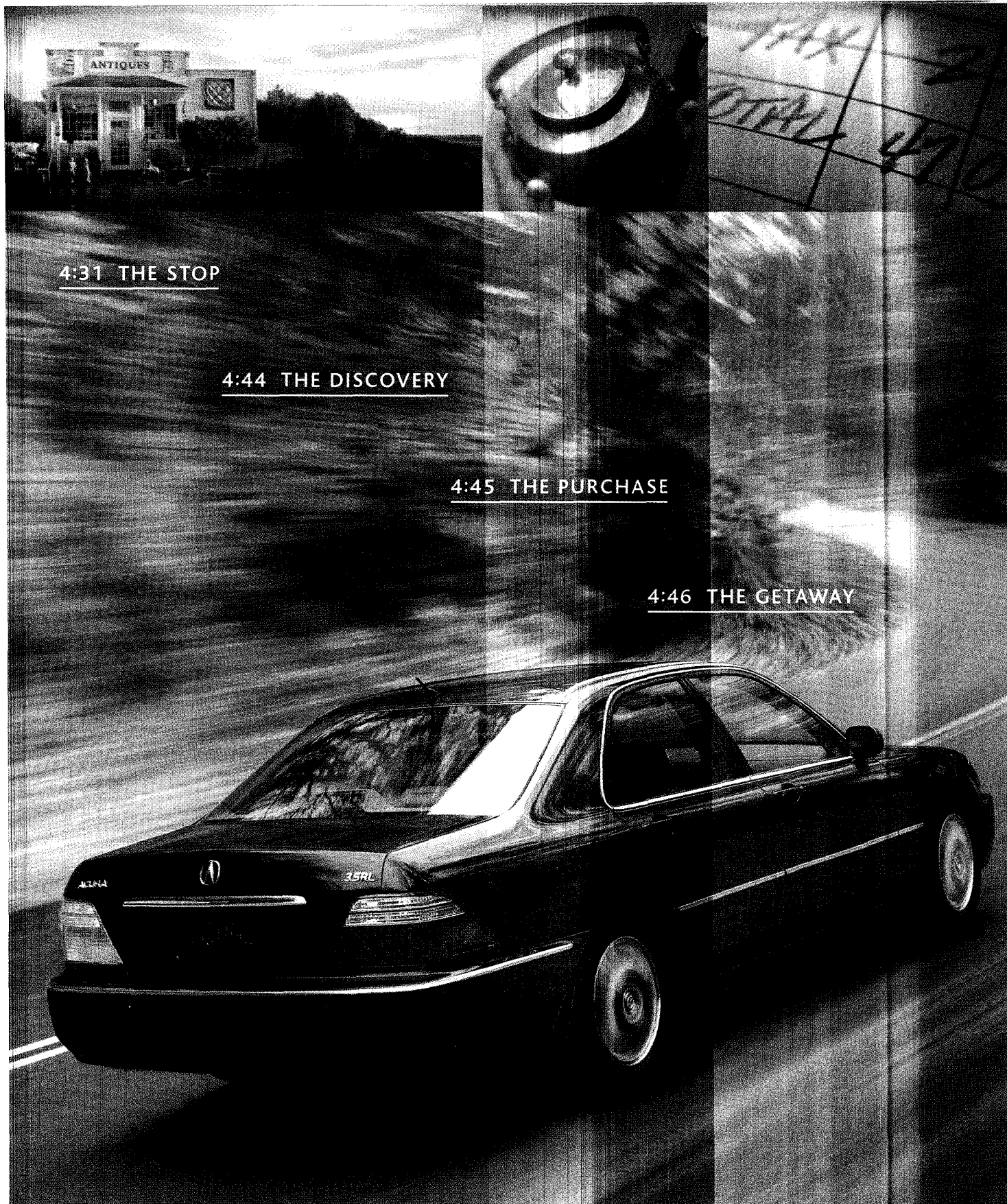
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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT BOOK HIM



Forty years ago, people used to wonder what John F. Kennedy was going to get up to once he wasn't President anymore. His circle gloated that he would be only fifty-one after his second term. His plans for the post-White House years were unfixed. He talked vaguely of going back to the Senate, or being president of Harvard or Yale, or getting his hands on a newspaper—the *New York Herald Tribune*, perhaps, or the *Boston Globe*, or one of the Washington dailies. (Maybe he would have been the one to give Woodward and Bernstein the green light to pursue the Watergate story, except that, with J.F.K. around, Richard Nixon probably wouldn't ever have been President.) Health permitting, Kennedy would have remained a power through the nineteen-nineties and beyond. "Clear it with Jack" might have become the Democratic mantra. If he were alive today he would be eighty-four—just right for a pinochle game with Saul Bellow, Nelson Mandela, and the Pope.

One thing that ex-President Kennedy would have had to cope with would have been a slow, steady, decades-long drizzle of embarrassing revelations about his extramarital sentimental entangle-

ments. For ex-President Clinton, that problem has already been taken care of. The Monica Lewinsky mess is a big reason that the deal Clinton made last week with Alfred A. Knopf will bring him a record advance. But nobody expects a dirtier book than the one Kenneth Starr has already written. Clinton's mortifying secrets have already been revealed, in rather too vivid detail. He can decide to spin them, interpret them, ignore them, or illuminate them, but he can't decide to keep them.

Clinton's editors at Knopf, Robert Gottlieb and Sonny Mehta, were said to have been impressed by their new author's familiarity with and analyses of the memoirs of his predecessors. As

Clinton knows, the Presidential memoir is a relatively new phenomenon; and the territory of the *good* Presidential memoir is entirely uncharted. Grant's memoir remains the best book ever written by an ex, but it was about his brilliant generalship, not his somewhat less brilliant Presidency. (His editor, one Samuel L. Clemens, was almost as distinguished as Bob Gottlieb.) John Quincy Adams, Theodore Roosevelt, and Calvin Coolidge wrote memoirs of a sort, but the genre began in earnest at mid-century, when Herbert Hoover plunked down three indigestible volumes he had been hoarding and revising for twenty years. Since then, nearly every President who lived to tell the tale has tried to do so. (The sole exception is Bush the elder, who, in lieu of memoirs, has published a collection of nice little notes, his favored literary form, and a gray foreign-policy tome, co-authored with Brent Scowcroft.) The memoirs of Truman, Eisenhower, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan have ranged from O.K. to awful, with each tending to be worse than the one before. All of them have flashes of interest, sometimes inadvertent, but even the best tend to be dull, humorless, and narcissistic. Carter's memoir, for example, was as big a stinker as any other Presidential doorstopper with an embossed dust jacket and an over-optimistic press run. He has since become a prolific and unghosted author of "small" books. Their variety is highly eccentric (a book about fishing, a children's story illustrated by his daughter, a collection of



poems), but among them are a couple of mini-memoirs of genuine value, one about his first race for state senator and the other about his rural childhood. It's as if he were going back and doing the memoir thing over again, bit by bit.

Clinton won't have that luxury—not with an eight-figure advance breathing down his neck. He's going to have to get it right the first time. His book is supposed to come out in 2003. Even if he spends every waking moment chained to a word processor (an unlikely prospect), that's way too early. Presumably, Knopf reasons that new news sells better than old news. But nuggets of news are not what people buy books for. People buy books for two reasons. One is to have them, as prestige items or decorator accents; and this has been enough to propel most of the other Presidential memoirs onto the best-seller lists for a month or two. The other reason is to read them. And for people to want to read them, they have to be—by some standard or other (however debased), in some way or other—good.

Knopf may or may not be right that the commercial value of the book will diminish with time, but in every other way delay will be of the essence. The book will have a better shot at literary (and maybe even commercial) success if it is published in 2005 or later—and not just because it wouldn't have to share the spotlight with (or hog the spotlight from) Hillary's and could be written without worries about how it might affect the 2004 election. Bill Clinton, it must be said, don't know nothin' 'bout birthin' books. His only previous foray into the field was a banal, slapped-together 1996 policy pamphlet whose title ("Between Hope and History: Meeting America's Challenges for the Twenty-first Century") was nearly as long as its text. No one doubts that Clinton has the intellect, the energy, and (no snickering, please) the imagination to write something worth reading; the question is whether he has the perseverance, the discipline, and the patience. Authors crave approval as much as politicians do, but book-writing is lonely, spartan work. Round-the-clock gregariousness is not part of the job description.

Taking it slow isn't the same as taking it easy, the latter being one way in which Clinton runs second to his successor.

Last week, on the same front page that carried (above the fold) the story of Clinton's book deal, the *Washington Post* reported (below the fold) on the kickoff of George W. Bush's summer vacation—four full weeks, a holiday worthy of a retired bond dealer or a German factory worker. By Labor Day, the *Post* calculated, "Bush will have spent 42 per cent of his presidency at vacation spots or en route." Whether you think this is a good thing or a bad thing depends on how you like the results when Bush exerts himself. But at least it'll make for a shorter memoir.

—Hendrik Hertzberg

OFF CAMPUS CORNEL WEST BUSTS A RHYME



Cornel West, the author, philosopher, and professor of Afro-American studies at Harvard, folded his arms and put a long finger to his chin. "I'm hearing this already from the academy," he said. "The buzz is 'Oh, you've given up scholarship. You've become a performer.' But I'm telling everybody: It reinforces intellectualism. I'm taking it back to Chekhov and Tennessee Williams. It's intellectual without being cerebral."

The "it" in question is West's latest side project, a hip-hop CD called "Sketches of My Culture," on which West performs his own spoken-word soliloquies over music written and recorded by several friends of his brother, Clifton West, who was the album's executive producer. The other day, Professor West was dispatched by his record company, Artemis, to promote the album at a record-industry sales convention in Tarrytown, New York. When his turn came, West, who has a midrange Afro and almost always wears a three-piece suit and large round glasses, rushed to the front of the room to say a few words. But, instead of standing idly by, as planned, while tracks from his CD played on the sound system, he began to sway to the music.

"This is not a Harvard groove—this is for the dance crowd," he said into the microphone. "Which means we're going to have a little fun, a little . . . Try to re-

member the seventies." A potential single from the record, " '70s Song," filled the room. West started lip-synching, first to his own lines, then to those of the record's guest vocalist, Haskell Jackson, Jr. West reeled from side to side, shaking his shoulders, then working his arms into a tight fist-over-fist rhythm.

"We try to fuse the musical, the intel-



Cornel West

lectual, the sensual," West cooed, riffing on some of the lyrics from the record. "From the painful laughter of the blues themselves to the sophistication of jazz, to rhythm and blues and the sharing of soothing sweetness, to the sweetness of soul. Then along comes hip-hop, with its linguistic virtuosity and rhythmic velocity, all connected to the struggle for freedom."

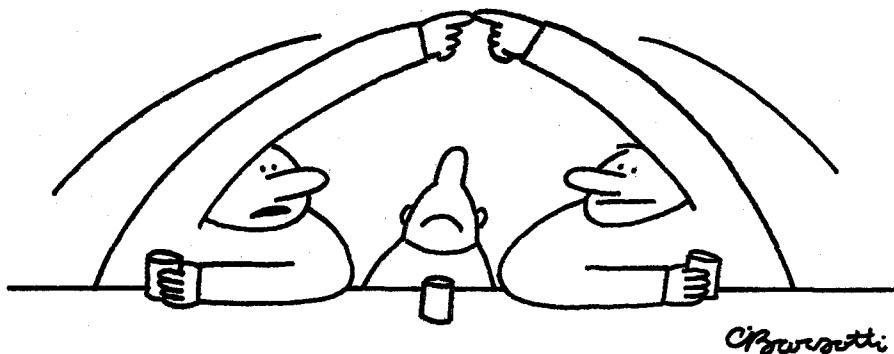
By the next song, "3Ms," a tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr., Medgar Evers, and Malcolm X, West was performing a multipart pantomime—mouthing the verses, the overlapping falsetto choruses, and the sampled fist-to-the-heavens speeches—while two hundred salespeople in cargo shorts nodded along. "Love the message," one of them said.

It was a tough act to follow. A little later, Tom Scholz, of the seventies rock band Boston, was featured onstage. Scholz, who is a gawky six-five, wore a golf shirt embroidered with the band's flying-saucer logo and Web-site address. He merely looked at the floor as everybody listened to his new song. With a chantlike melody, it sounded as if he'd composed it while gazing upon a



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"You see, Murphy's finger is coming from North Korea or someplace, but my finger comes up and hits Murphy's finger. That's how the missile-defense system will work—if it works."

moat. "This guy is a legend," Cornel said to his brother, bouncing up and down. "I heard Brother Scholz has been working on this album fourteen years. He's got a really high quality of craft."

"I'm thinking, Maybe I can get his autograph for one of my clients," said Clifton, who by day is a software consultant in Sacramento.

"You want to go out on a high note for the brother, but I didn't want to upstage anybody," West said, somewhat apologetically. "Music is how he's paid the rent. It's just over here for me." He gestured to his side, patting an imaginary dog.

Cornel and Clifton are very close. Each man named his son after the other. "Doing the CD was sort of an excuse for us to be together," West said. "We had a time, brother, in the studio. Deep feeling, deep spirit. They'd already laid down the music and come up with the themes when I flew in to improvise the verses. They only wanted me to speak. But when I got in there I got involved in the rapping direction. It just came forth."

"We had to stop you from rapping," Clifton said. "We were busting up."

"Was it that bad, man?" West said. "De hip, hip, hip hip-hop. And you don't stop. I flew three thousand miles to do Tupac." He fingered his cufflinks, which were gold and molded in the shape of the Lion of Judah. ("Tikkun olam all the way," he said. "Hebrew scripture, uh-huh.")

Danny Goldberg, the chairman of Artemis, signed West to a three-record contract, and he figures the record will sell at least fifty thousand copies. "But

possibly a lot more," Goldberg said. "He's very musical. I'd met him over the years because he writes for *Tikkun* and my father and I were the publishers."

At one point that afternoon, the basketball star Shaquille O'Neal, who has a new CD coming out, showed up for an extended photo opportunity. "I just want to shake the brother's hand," West said, joining a knot of admirers. "As for a picture of the two of us—no, no, no. I don't do that." When O'Neal saw West, his face lit up, and he stooped for an embrace. "Professor," O'Neal said. "It's a tribute to meet you. Thank you for writing what you do." They spoke for a minute or two and hugged again. "Stay strong, brother," West said.

Afterward, West got into Clifton's rental car, and they headed toward the city. "We're going to hook up with Shaq tomorrow," West said, lighting up a small cigar. "Call the Trump International. We're just gonna go kick it with him, talk about life, talk about struggle."

—Eric Konigsberg

BUG'S LIFE FLICKERS ON FIFTH



The fireflies are out in force on Fifth Avenue this summer. They are everywhere: floating in and out of the twilight along the cobbled sidewalk near the Park, resting invisibly among

the twigs in the gutters, hovering around the doormen at epaulet level. They are out elsewhere, too, of course: everywhere in and around Central Park is dense with them, and reports have come in from the Island. But there is something piquant about their presence on Fifth. They are the only creatures living there who have not first had to seek approval.

They are this year's Razor scooter, the thing that every child wants. On a recent evening at eight o'clock, a small boy set off up Fifth Avenue in the Nineties, jar in hand—actually, it was a plastic receptacle that had held takeout chicken vindaloo the night before—and stalked his prey. This is not very good sport, since fireflies are almost ridiculously easy to catch: you can pluck them out of the air gently with your hand and hold them there.

This summer's fireflies glow green, and only when they want to. The green is a strange, X-Men kind of green, the color of the aureole that comic-book artists used to draw to suggest mutancy, radioactivity—the chartreuse glow that engulfed Bruce Banner as he became the Incredible Hulk. And, whereas the fireflies of years past seemed to go on glowing in your hand, these resolutely shut down. Park them where you will, and they sulk. The firefly in the vindaloo not only refused to glow but just sat there, awaiting sentence.

It seemed like a good idea to call Eric Quinter, a senior scientific assistant in the Division of Invertebrate Zoology at the American Museum of Natural History—a big guy among bug guys. Quinter said, "They've been doing well everywhere I've been this summer, so it doesn't surprise me to hear that they're doing well on Fifth. Fireflies, as I hope you know, are beetles, even though they're called flies. They live for the most part in lawn turf as larvae, and always do well in urban parks. Whatever it was about this year—maybe the strange weather in the spring, the dry summer—has just made them have a better than average year. Several insects have been out in large numbers this summer. Armyworms and red-admiral butterflies are extremely abundant.

"There are different firefly species, and they have different colors. Some are yellow and some—these are rare

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here—are orangeish and some are just green. Flashing their light is the way they speak and flirt. One long or two or three shorts—this is how they identify each other. I've seen at least four species this summer. Some keep right on flashing, and others you put in a jar and they put out their lights."

Quinter is usually a Joe Friday, just-the-facts type of commentator, but fireflies seem to light him up. "Much has been made of these animals, because they can produce light without heat—the bioluminescence phenomenon. Geneticists are finding out which genes are responsible for it." Then he joked, "They might someday be able to create an index finger that glows in the dark and would help you to dial a telephone."

The folk explanation (popular on Fifth Avenue) for the current abundance of fireflies is that they are here because the mosquitoes are not. Last summer's West Nile spraying, the legend goes, has eliminated the blood-suckers and left a niche for the fireflies. Quinter is appropriately skeptical of this explanation—"I doubt that," he said. "They don't compete for the same niche at all"—but it is tempting to brood on the difference between last summer's bug and this summer's bug, the mosquito and the firefly.

The past year, after all, has seen a noticeable and yet still unacknowledged drop in the city's fever, from the mad heights of February, 2000, when the Nasdaq still boomed and the real-estate market bellowed and New York seemed a city almost radioactive with hope and confidence, to this moment—not depressed but dimmed, moving back toward the familiar New York ground of muggings and graffiti and bad schools. The cabbies are once again driving too fast, the people on the subways look a little worn down. It's hardly a crash, but it's a fall, a definite fall, a scary little plunge, a patch of turbulence. The West Nile mosquito was the bug of choice for the gilded age: dumb, annoying, impossible to overlook. One might think that the firefly, in all its gaudiness, would be the boom-time bug, but the mosquito was the real, secret conscience of the nineties. Fireflies, all flash and no heat, are our bugs, and they glow grudgingly, like us. They reflect the character

of this summer: like Lizzie Grubman, they don't like being told where to park; like Michael Bloomberg, they glow brighter from a distance; like Derek Jeter, they glow fitfully when we hoped they'd burn strong. Last summer's bug was the whine in the ear of an imperial city, reminding us how vulnerable we are. This summer's is a consolation, and all the things we would still like to be: sexy yet reticent, and bringing its own gilding to a drier season.

—Adam Gopnik

CORONER'S REPORT A REALLY COLD CASE



Last month, a team of scientists in Bolzano, Italy, announced that they had finally determined the cause of death of the Iceman—the celebrated fifty-three-hundred-year-old body that was found, frozen and mummified, in the Alps in 1991. New, multidimensional X-ray images have revealed a flint arrowhead lodged beneath the Iceman's left shoulder; it appears to have ripped through his left arm, tearing veins and nerves and causing fatal bleeding. The Iceman was the victim of a violent attack by another human being—not, as had previously been speculated, the unfortunate prey of inclement weather, or a fall, or an ill-timed high-altitude nap.

This news was of particular interest to Simon McBurney, the co-founder and director of the London-based *Complicite* (which used to be the Theatre de Complicite), whose play "Mnemonic" takes the Iceman as its enigmatic hero, and whose own theory of how the Iceman died now appears uncannily prescient. (The show had a ten-week run at the John Jay College Theatre, in New York, this spring.) In the show, a thrilling meditation on memory, the resurrection of the Iceman—the Italians and the Austrians squabble over his nationality; academics come up with competing theories about whether he was a shepherd or a shaman—is juxtaposed with evocations of twentieth-century European history,

its genocides and compulsory exiles. McBurney plays several roles, including that of the Iceman, repeatedly stripping naked to become the corpse as it lies on an examining table or on an icy mountainside. The play suggests that the Iceman could have been the victim of a Stone Age pogrom: that his village might have been sacked by mass-murdering invaders, and that he could have died after making a precipitate flight to the mountains with a determined foe at his back.

"In the show, we imply that there was a degree of violence at the end of his life," McBurney said last week, speaking by telephone from northern Italy, where he was on vacation. "His body is like a kind of book, and every time people decipher another few pages there is great excitement, but essentially the book all leads in the same direction. When I read the news reports, I noticed that the arrowhead invites immediate speculation about who shot him," he said. "I find it very unlikely that he was simply shot at by another hunter." McBurney said that he had just been in Ukraine, in the home town of the Polish writer Bruno Schulz, whose stories he dramatized in his show "Street of Crocodiles." "That part of the world has forever had these massive waves of violence sweeping through it like the ocean," McBurney said. "In the woods there, there are more graves than there are trees." This landscape, he went on, reiterated the question at the center of "Mnemonic": "How do we accept something that is essentially human—this desire to sweep some people aside and reestablish ourselves?"

McBurney, whose father was an archaeologist, said that he became fascinated with the Iceman when he was first uncovered. He has, however, never paid a visit to the body he reincarnates onstage. "I have seen him so clearly in my mind's eye already," he said. *Complicite* has been asked to do the show in Bolzano, so that a family reunion can take place. "Maybe I will look at him and burst into tears," McBurney said. "One of the beautiful things about this frozen body is that it is a metaphor for what is unchanging. We are quite wrong to think that we have somehow vastly improved."

—Rebecca Mead

THE FINANCIAL PAGE VIDEO KILLS THE VIDEO STAR

In the summer of 1942, a little company called Capitol Records issued its first six singles. This was not a great time to start a record label: the country was emerging from the Depression, wartime restrictions made vinyl hard to come by, and the musicians' union forbade its members to record music. But Capitol's founders knew how to promote a record. In particular, they understood radio. The major record companies thought that radio was the enemy: that people wouldn't buy records if they could get music free over the airwaves. So companies discouraged radio stations from playing their songs and pressed them for royalties. But Capitol saw radio for what it was: free advertising. It was the first label to send disk jockeys free advance copies of its records. Not surprisingly, Capitol took off. By the next decade, it was a major label—home to Frank Sinatra and Nat King Cole—and its competitors had come around to the idea that radio was their friend.

When MTV started out, twenty years ago, the record industry thought it knew what it was getting: more free advertising, with pictures. Before long, all the major labels were producing videos for almost all their artists. MTV's national (and eventually global) reach and its around-the-clock music-video programming made it, in essence, the world's most powerful radio station. It could turn unknowns—Duran Duran, Men at Work, Cyndi Lauper—into stars. Getting a video on MTV seemed like a much more efficient, and effective, way of pushing a product than courting program directors at every WROK in the Lower Forty-eight.

As videos became more important to the record companies, though, they became less important to MTV. Kids may love videos, but shows are what keep them from changing the channel. Over the years, MTV has steadily cut back on the number of videos it airs, replacing them with programs like "The Real World." According to a study by Broadcast Data Systems, the number of videos on MTV dropped by a third between

1998 and 2000. As a result, MTV became less like radio and more like, well, television. But, though MTV changed, the record industry did not. It stuck with the approach to music videos—make a ton of them—that it had learned and thrived on in MTV's early days.

This state of affairs has only magnified MTV's power in the music business. The fewer bands MTV deigns to bless, the more important each blessing seems to be. The daily call-in program "Total Request Live," this age's "Ed Sullivan Show," has a huge impact on the record sales of its anointed few. And bands that MTV deems "buzzworthy" routinely see a sizable jump in sales.

That clout manifests itself every



Monday, when the twenty or so employees of MTV's music-programming department gather in a New York conference room to screen the week's video crop. The programmers kibbitz, then vote on which videos will make the playlist. Later that day, a larger group decides when the new videos will be aired, and how often. In such a manner, rock-star fortunes can be made and lost.

Lost, more often than not. Most videos don't cut it. Last year, more than a thousand new ones were produced; MTV played around two hundred and fifty of them. (There are other outlets, like MTV2 and BET, which matter to hip-hop and indie bands, but they don't have anything like MTV's influence or reach.) The average music video now

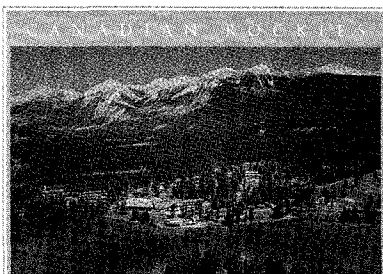
costs an estimated two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to make. "On the vast majority of videos, you never have a hope of recouping what you spent," one industry insider says. "That money is just gone. Video is the least rational side of a business that's not too rational to begin with."

So what would be rational? Make fewer videos. The labels could do some winnowing of their own, instead of spending millions on spec and throwing themselves on the mercy of twenty guayabera-clad hepcats in an MTV conference room. You hear rumblings about labels cutting back, but the old video habit, formed in the heady days of "I want my MTV," dies hard. "The basic assumption is that if you're going to release a song you're going to make a video," Kate Miller, the vice-president of video production at Capitol Records, says.

Besides, it keeps the artists happy, even though they're probably going to pay for it out of their own royalties. To a pop star on the rise, the lavish video is a rite of passage; to an established star, it's a measure of the label's commitment. Either way, it's central to the experience, like the groupies and the limousines. That's why most recording artists make sure their contracts include a clause guaranteeing them a video.

Of course, artists and labels also have their eyes on the big payoff. Who can say who will be the next Kid Rock? And so crap-shoot economics—blockbuster or bust—rule. Record companies are willing to roll the dice a hundred times to have a Britney Spears come up once. And they pour more and more money into each video, to get it to stand out from the pack. In the process, they have turned the video business into something that's a lot like the record business, where ninety per cent of all records don't become hits and mega-sellers earn most of the profits. There's just one difference: Make a record that doesn't hit big and you've still got something you can sell for the next twenty years. Make a video that doesn't end up on MTV and you have nothing. Except a two-hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar hole in your pocket.

—James Surowiecki



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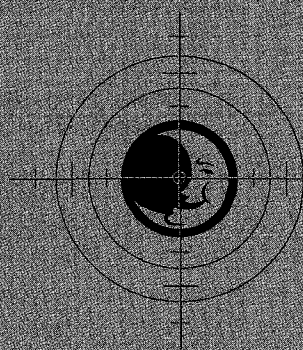
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THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

GETTIN' PAID

Jay-Z, criminal culture, and the rise of corporate rap.

BY KELEFA SANNEH

Earlier this year, VH1, the music-video channel, broadcast a television series called "Bands on the Run." Four rock groups were sent on tour, competing to see which one could sell the most merchandise; the winner would get a hundred thousand dollars' worth of new equipment, fifty thousand dollars in cash, a VH1-financed video, and a showcase concert with industry executives. The bands weren't very good, but the animosity of the competition was entertaining. In one episode, a group called Soulcraacker started a grassroots smear campaign, telling fans that a victory for the rival group Flickerstick would be a victory for "corporate rock." It was an absurd claim—both bands were, after all, angling for a corporate contract, on a corporate television show—and the insult backfired: Flickerstick demanded an apology, and got one. The next week, Flickerstick won the competition.

What's funny about the insult is how old-fashioned it seems. The term "corporate rock" is a relic of the nineteen-seventies, popularized by critics who felt that the big record companies had coöpted a rebellious, authentic genre for mass consumption. In 1978, the rock journalist Lester Bangs wrote, "The music business today still must be recognized as *by definition* an enemy, if not the most crucial enemy, of music and the people who try to perform it honestly." Over the past ten years, though, "corporate rock" has been upstaged by "corporate rap," which has emerged as the country's new music. Rappers are responsible for three of the country's ten most popular albums, and the Recording Industry Association of America estimates that last year rap music generated more than \$1.8 billion in sales, accounting for 12.9 per cent of all music purchases; it has surpassed country music as the nation's second most popular

genre, after rock and roll. The obscure rap record labels Fo' Reel and Hypnotize Minds have teamed up with the media conglomerates Vivendi Universal and Sony, respectively, and have found millions of customers. Rappers, with a few notable exceptions, are black men, but their listeners are not: about seventy per cent of the people who buy rap albums are white, and an increasingly large percentage are female. "Hip-hop," once a noun, has become an adjective, constantly invoked, if rarely defined; people talk about hip-hop fashion and hip-hop novels, hip-hop movies and hip-hop basketball. Like rock and roll in the nineteen-sixties, hip-hop is both a movement and a marketing ploy, and the word is used to describe almost anything that's supposed to appeal to young people.

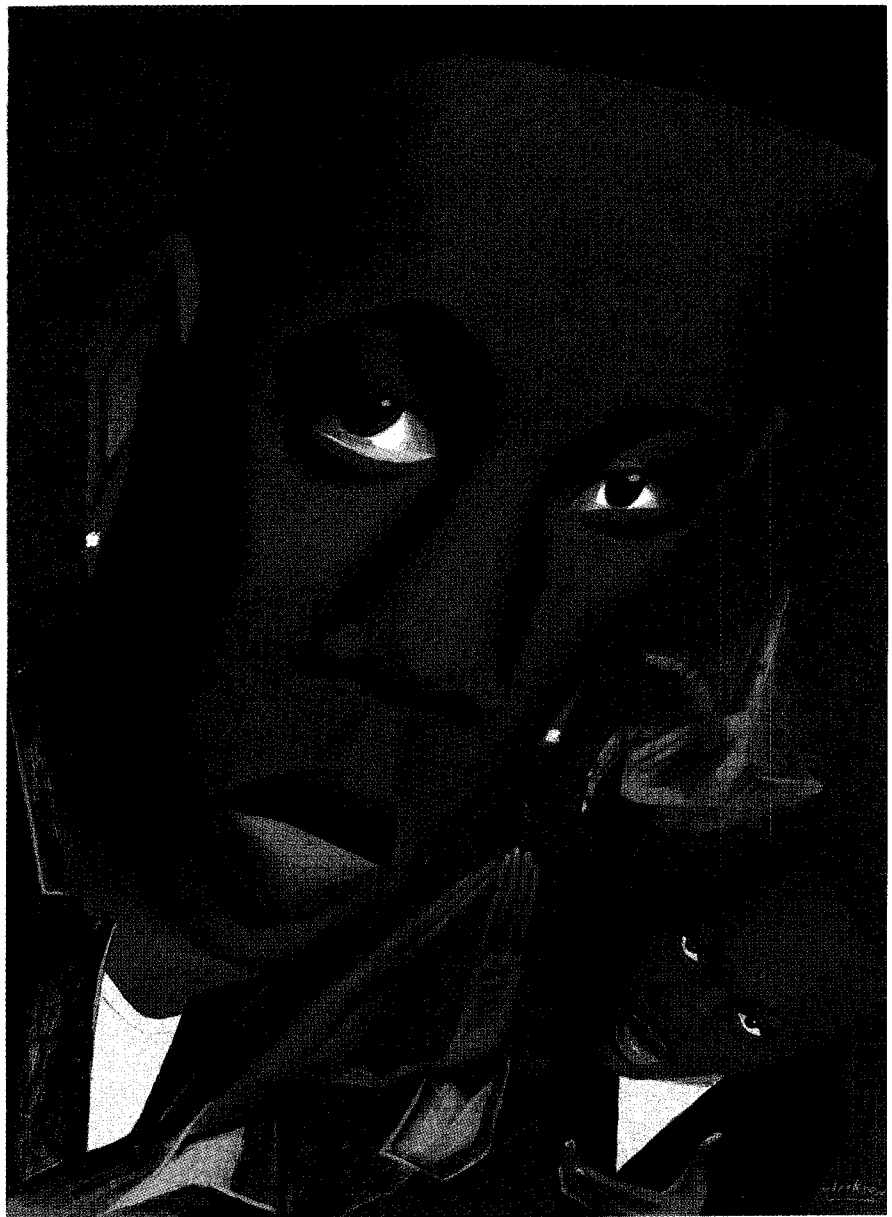
What's most unexpected about this boom is the reaction of the rappers themselves, who rose to prominence as icons of rebellion and authenticity. They have not only accepted corporate rap but embraced it. Like Frank Sinatra before them, they are chairmen of the board: *Fortune* put the rapper Master P on its cover in 1999, after he branched out into film production, sports management, and fashion, and today's biggest rap acts, from OutKast to Snoop Dogg, are diversifying, leveraging their popularity to create their own companies. Eminem may deliver antisocial lyrics, but as a businessman he's a model citizen, an entrepreneur who recently put his solo career on hold so he could build up his new imprint, Shady Records.

The greatest of the corporate rappers is Jay-Z, a thirty-one-year-old tycoon from the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. He has all the necessary credentials: a record label (Roc-A-Fella Records), a clothing company (Rocawear), a production house (Roc-A-Fella Films). What's

more, he has the right sensibility: non-chalant, devious, witty. He has put out five successful albums in five years—the only rapper to have done so—starting with “Reasonable Doubt,” his debut, in 1996, and he’s sold more than eleven million records. Many rappers have made money, and lots of it, but none have rapped so eloquently about making money, or about the lure of wealth and ambition. Jay-Z has succeeded by treating hip-hop above all as a corporate enterprise, by embracing ruthless professionalism as his guiding aesthetic. As he once put it, “What y’all about to witness is big business, kid.”

I met Jay-Z for the first time this spring, in Los Angeles. He was in town for the Soul Train Music Awards (he’d been named male entertainer of the year), and I spent a day watching him rehearse and shop for sneakers at a nearby mall. There was a constant procession of well-wishers and autograph-seekers, and he greeted most of them wordlessly, with faint smiles and loose handclaps. Jay-Z is not flamboyant in the way that rappers are expected to be flamboyant. He doesn’t have a gimmick, or an outlandish persona, or an especially fancy wardrobe. He usually wears a T-shirt and jeans, invariably made by Rocawear. He’s tall and lanky. His hair is shaved barbershop-close, and there is the hint of a goatee on his chin. Diamond earrings and a diamond pendant are the only indications of his fortune and, indirectly, his fame.

Jay-Z was born Shawn Corey Carter in 1969. He grew up in the Marcy City Housing Projects, a forbidding bastion in Bedford-Stuyvesant; he has turned the project name into a hip-hop brand name. (At a recent concert in Washington, D.C., he was introduced with the words “Marcy projects, y’all!”) He was the youngest of four children, two boys and two girls, and was brought up by his mother, Gloria; his father left the family when Jay-Z was eleven. Jay-Z is among the few rappers who memorize rhymes without committing them to paper, but he says that as a kid he always kept a green notebook with him. “I used to write in it every day, at my mom’s house, banging on the table and saying my raps,” he says. When an older neighbor called Big Jaz got a record



Beanie Sigel (right) says that meeting Jay-Z was like meeting the perfect hustler.

deal, Jay-Z left George Westinghouse Technical High School to become his sidekick. “He took me to London, and I was, like, ‘People pay you? To make raps? Oh, shit!’” After a few years, when it was clear that Big Jaz would never become a major rap star, Jay-Z left him to tour with Big Daddy Kane, a popular rapper whose career was beginning to decline.

Jay-Z returned to Brooklyn, where, he says, he spent his early twenties selling crack cocaine. He is vague about the specifics. “I was running the streets,” he told me, and that’s about as far as he would go. In song, he’s more forthcoming:

I took trips with so much shit in the whip
that if the
cops pulled us over, the dog would get sick.

In 1995, after Jay-Z was shot at from six feet away, he decided to give rapping another try. A producer named Clark Kent introduced him to Damon Dash, a Harlem entrepreneur who had contacts in the rap industry, but no one was interested in signing Jay-Z. His old songs were considered too “sophisticated,” he told me. “You had to really like rap to be, like, ‘This dude’s clever: the way he’s using his words, the way he tackles his subjects—that’s different.’” So Jay-Z and Dash, along with a silent partner, Kareem (Biggs) Burke, formed Roc-A-Fella Records, to put out Jay-Z’s music themselves. Roc-A-Fella eventually struck a distribution deal with Priority Records (which it later left for Island/Def Jam), and issued Jay-Z’s first

album, "Reasonable Doubt," in 1996. A cheerful, filthy love song called "Ain't No Nigga" became his first hit; it also launched the career of Foxy Brown, who rapped as Jay-Z's girlfriend.

"Reasonable Doubt" is filled with rhymes as smooth as the hustlers Jay-Z sings about, and even the grittiest (or most exuberant) song suggests the poise and strength of a shrewd businessman. The first thing you notice listening to the album is the high, nasal voice, steely and precise; the enunciation is clear, and Jay-Z moves over each syllable lightly. The words pour out so effortlessly that rhyme and rhythm seem almost like an afterthought. His style is suggestive rather than declamatory; instead of shouting threats of murder, he sighs, "Believe you me, son, I hate to do it just as bad as you hate to see it done."

"Reasonable Doubt" sold more than half a million copies, but in order to cross over to the pop audience Jay-Z needed catchier tunes. Rap songs are a combination of rhyming and "beats"—heavily rhythmic tracks built from synthetic sounds, live instrumental music, and samples of other songs. In 1997, Jay-Z tried to find a more beat-driven sound; the result was a disappointing album called "In My Lifetime, Vol. 1" ("I wish I could have nailed that one," he

says now) that sampled eighties rock songs such as "You Belong to the City" and "I Know What Boys Like." Then, in 1998, he bought an unlikely beat from a veteran producer named Mark 45 King, which added a heavy bass line to "It's the Hard-Knock Life," from the musical "Annie." Jay-Z slowed down his delivery to match the tempo, and the result was the crossover hit "Hard Knock Life (Ghetto Anthem)":

I'm a be on top, whether I perform or
not. I went from
lukewarm to hot, sleeping on futons and
cots to king-size dream machines.

An accompanying album, "Vol. 2 . . . Hard Knock Life," sold more than five million copies, and made Jay-Z rap's biggest star.

Jay-Z has made two albums since. "Vol. 3 . . . Life and Times of S. Carter," was released in 1999, and "The Dynasty: Roc La Familia (2000-)," a showcase for other artists on Jay-Z's record label, was released last October. Since his first album, Jay-Z has simplified his intricate rhyme style: his lyrics have become less tightly constructed, and less descriptive—an approach that appeals to mainstream fans, who buy hip-hop for the beats, not the words. He explains by affecting the pinched voice

of a casual, presumably white listener: "I'm from West Motherfuck. I don't know what they're talking about. But the music is good." When I asked him if he thought the transformation was an improvement, he responded with an unsentimental comparison to Michael Jordan. "In his early days, Jordan was rocking a cradle, cranking it, all crazy, but he wasn't winning championships," Jay-Z said. "And then, later in his career, he just had a fadeaway jump shot, and they won six titles. Which was the better Jordan? I don't know."

In an earlier era, a rapper might have been tempted to ignore mainstream listeners, or to pretend to, but for Jay-Z sound business practice trumps artistic ambition. Still, no one wants to watch a man make jump shots forever—not even perfectly executed fadeaway jump shots—and so Jay-Z has to find a way to keep people interested, including aficionados. On "The Dynasty," he rapped about a girlfriend's miscarriage, and he and one of his protégés, Beanie Sigel, have written a pair of songs that berate their deadbeat dads. Songs such as these convincingly convey personal desperation, but they suggest a professional desperation as well.

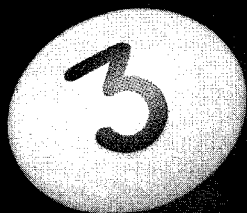
In the beginning, hip-hop wasn't "about" anything at all: it was invented not by rappers but by disk jockeys. In 1973, a Jamaican immigrant in the Bronx who called himself DJ Kool Herc popularized the art of manipulating two turntables at once, so he could repeat his favorite drum patterns over and over. The jumpy music that resulted was given the name hip-hop. D.j.s who performed regularly in parks or clubs or roller rinks began hiring m.c.s to extoll their skills to the crowd, drawing on the African-American tradition of street-corner rhyming. In the studios, when the first hip-hop records were made, d.j.s were sometimes replaced by live bands, and the m.c., or rapper, became central to the music. In 1979, a group of dilettantes called the Sugarhill Gang released a song called "Rapper's Delight," and it became a hit. "Hip-hop" had become "rap music."

The first generation of stars were cartoonish figures from New York City—Kurtis Blow, Whodini, Run DMC, the Fat Boys, the Beastie Boys,



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and LL Cool J. They had whimsical names and wore whimsical clothes, and their records were filled with whimsical boasts. Run DMC proclaimed itself “the big, bad wolf in your neighborhood—not bad meaning bad, but bad meaning good.” Then, in 1988, Public Enemy, a Long Island collective, released an album entitled, “It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back.” The group presented itself as a paramilitary outfit agitating for black power, and, just as the Beatles established the idea that pop songs could be art, Public Enemy established the idea that hip-hop could be politics.

Hip-hop has an insatiable appetite for new characters and new stories, and Public Enemy was soon overshadowed by a West Coast counterpart, NWA (or Niggaz with Attitude). NWA had a different arsenal of slogans—“Fuck tha Police” instead of Public Enemy’s “Fight the Power”—which were delivered in first-person tales of crime and sex influenced by nineteen-eighties storytellers like Too \$hort, Slick Rick, Kool G Rap, and Ice-T (who named himself after the pulp novelist and ex-pimp Iceberg Slim). A new term was coined to describe this foulmouthed genre: gangsta rap. And yet, for anyone who follows hip-hop closely, “gangsta rap” isn’t a very useful term; over the past ten years, it has come to denote any rapper who talks about gunplay in the first person—and this includes almost every one.

Rappers may emulate businessmen these days, but they are still linked to crime and violence. The story of corporate rap starts with the murder of two of the most popular rappers of the nineteen-nineties: in September of 1996, in Las Vegas, Tupac Shakur (who recorded as 2pac) was shot and killed, and six months later, in Los Angeles, Christopher Wallace, better known as the Notorious B.I.G. (or Biggie Smalls) was shot and killed; neither case has been solved. Shakur and the Notorious B.I.G. followed NWA, putting NWA’s thuggish imagery to more personal use. On albums such as “Me Against the World” and “All Eyez on Me,” Shakur turned his life into an epic tale of self-sacrifice. Biggie was a superior stylist and a great narrator; he told his life story in a series of morbid jokes and pointed anecdotes. Both Biggie and Shakur cel-

ebrated money, but mainly they celebrated themselves, and you got the sense that they might have rapped for nothing, if they’d had to. The two had once been friends, but they had become embroiled in a seemingly baseless feud—it involved a mugging and, of course, a woman—when Shakur was killed.

The Notorious B.I.G. was a protégé of Sean (Puffy) Combs, a music executive who moonlighted as a rapper under the name Puff Daddy. In the summer of 1997, Combs initiated hip-hop’s big-money boom with a eulogy for Biggie called “I’ll Be Missing You,” in which he rapped over “Every Breath You Take,” the eighties chestnut by the Police. “I’ll Be Missing You,” which became the most popular song of the summer, seemed to be the paradigmatic story of hip-hop: a flashy businessman mourning a slain thug.

Most people thought of Puffy and Biggie as opposites—the executive and the thug, the businessman and the artist, the pop star and the rapper—but Jay-Z’s insight was to seize upon the avarice that united them. Rappers had long suggested that the music industry wasn’t much different from the drug world (as Biggie put it, “If I wasn’t in the rap game / I’d probably have a ki, knee-deep in the crack game”); now Jay-Z conflated Biggie’s eloquent thug and Puffy’s smooth executive to create the image of an utterly mercenary man who just happens to rap. In an industry characterized by pumped-up personae, it reminded the listener that rapping is nothing more or less than a job. And in the wake of two murders, that seemed like good news—and good business.

Still, it is tempting to believe that rappers are the deadliest rich people in the country, forever guzzling champagne and spilling blood, and the arrests that have accompanied hip-hop’s mainstream success have only reinforced this perception. In 1999, Combs was charged with beating a record executive with a chair, a telephone, and a champagne bottle (hip-hop has a weakness

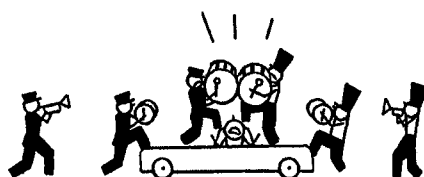
for leaden symbolism). The charges were later dropped. Recently, Combs stood trial for weapons and bribery charges in connection with a 1999 night-club shooting. (He was acquitted, but his protégé Shyne was convicted of assault, reckless endangerment, and gun possession, and was sentenced to ten years in prison.) Three weeks before the Combs shooting, Jay-Z was arrested for the stabbing of Lance (Un) Rivera, a record executive (and former friend) whom the rapper reportedly suspected of pirating his new album before its official release date. (The trial is scheduled to start next month.) In April, Jay-Z was arrested again; police said that his bodyguard had been found outside a night club with an unlicensed Glock 9-mm. semiautomatic.

Earlier this year, it was reported that New York police were “profiling” rappers, and last month the Senate held hearings on “media violence,” focussing on the world of hip-hop. Hip-hop is a particularly easy target for cops and senators, because rappers make their living by telling stories that sound like autobiography, and they do so in lyrics that are spoken, not sung. Six months before his most recent arrest, Jay-Z seems to have predicted it in rhyme, right down to the kind of gun:

See me with a bodyguard? That means
police is watching. And I
only use his waist just to keep my Glock
in. But
when shit goes down, you know who’s
doing the popping.

Life rarely imitates art that faithfully, but the convergence of rap and rap sheet is so common in hip-hop that it was barely noted even by Jay-Z’s most vigilant fans.

To a casual listener, it may not be immediately obvious what makes one rapper better than another. But, like the generation of fans who dissected Bob Dylan’s lyrics and debated the merits of various bootleg recordings, rap fans pore over arcana in magazines and squabble about literary prowess online. On one hip-hop Web site, visitors recently debated “What is the hottest metaphor or simile ever written?” From the beginning, Jay-Z was admired for the quality of his



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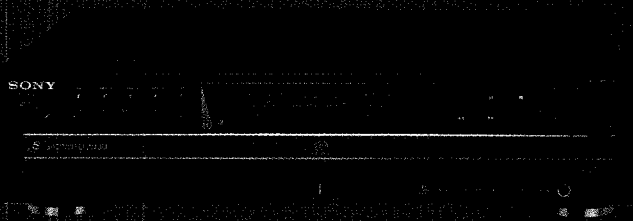
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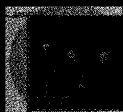
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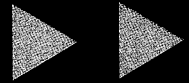
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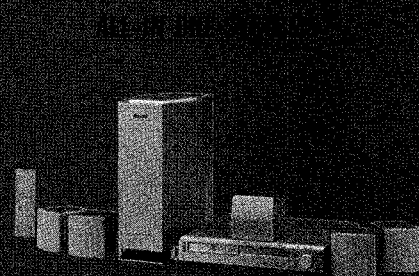
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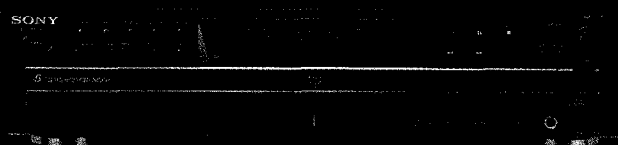
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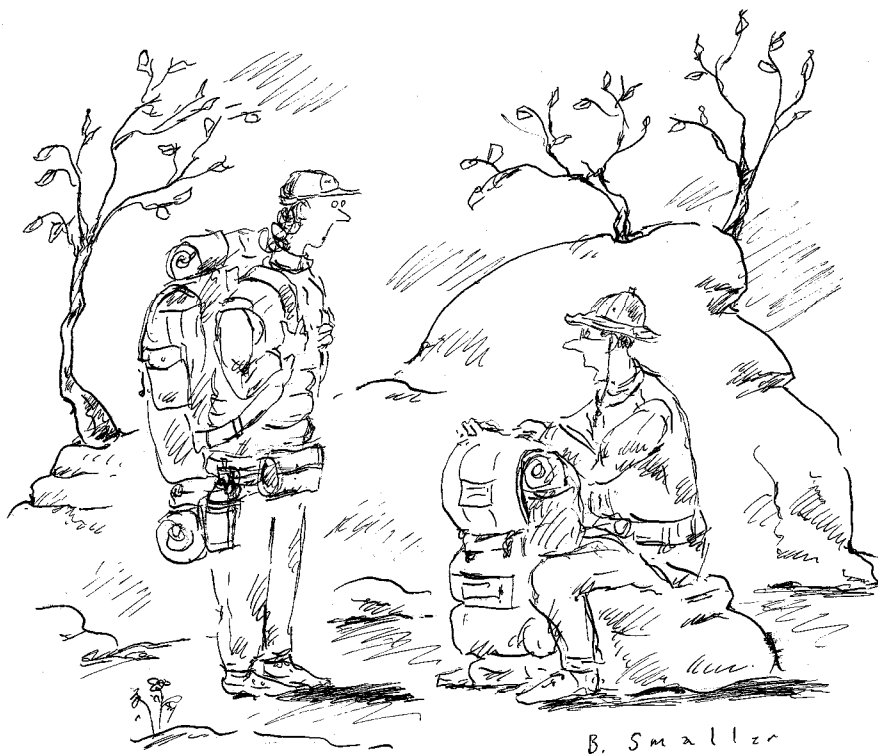
verse. He compared his rhymes to luxury goods, as a way of flattering his listeners' powers of discernment:

Time to separate
the pros from the cons, the platinum
from the bronze,
that butter-soft shit from that leather on
the Fonz.

Much attention has been paid to rap's content—the prevalence of words like “nigga” and “bitch,” the forthright treatment of sex and violence—but surprisingly little to the construction of the lyrics. And yet success in hip-hop has as much to do with style as with content. For much of the nineteen-eighties, rap was bound by strict metric conventions: each line had four beats, with the stress on the second and the fourth, and each verse was a series of couplets. Run DMC perfected doggerel in 1984 (“Cool chief rocker, I don't drink vodka / But keep a microphone inside my locker”), and by 1988 the rhyme virtuoso Rakim had stretched the rules with tricky alliteration and run-on lines (“Music mixed mellow maintains to make / melodies for m.c.s, motivates the breaks”).

Jay-Z's lyrics, on the other hand, sound like everyday speech. He throws in conversational tics—a little laugh in the middle of a line, or a pause, as if he were thinking something through—to heighten the effect. This style creates a sense of intimacy, which is undermined by a chilly sensibility, a frankly avaricious way of looking at the world, and an aversion to sentiment. In his best songs, Jay-Z exploits this contradiction by telling stories that balance a C.E.O.'s suave self-confidence with a memoirist's introspection, using unpredictable rhyme schemes to keep the listener off balance. “D'evils,” from “Reasonable Doubt,” begins with a criminal's monologue:

The shit is wicked on these mean streets—
none of my
friends speak, we all tryna win. But then
again,
maybe it's for the best, though, 'cause
when they seeing too
much, you know they tryna get you
touched. Whoever said
illegal was the easy way out couldn't
understand the
mechanics and the workings of the
underworld. Granted,
nine to five is how you survive—I ain't
tryna survive,



*“It's a good thing this is a leisure-time activity,
because you couldn't pay me to do it.”*

I'm tryna live it to the limit and love it a lot.
Life ills poison my body, and used to say,
“Fuck
mic skills!” I never prayed to God, I
prayed to Gotti. . . .
It gets dangerous, money and power is
changing us,
and now we're lethal, infected with d'evils.

“D'evils” (the title is pronounced “da evils”) is a song about money and power, and it describes a world in which ambition is the root of all evil (and all success), a world where the criminal ethic—“We all tryna win”—sounds a lot like a capitalist code. In the second verse, we find a young hustler kidnapping a young mother, desperate to locate her lover, who has, it seems, betrayed him in a business deal. The hustler pays her to squeal, and there's an implication of violence—“my hand around her collar”—suggesting that he might be literally stuffing her mouth full of bills: “About his whereabouts I wasn't convinced. / I kept feeding her money till her shit started to make sense.” It's a sardonic joke about the rap industry, which feeds its stars money and power in exchange for a convinc-

ing story. Jay-Z aspires to the hustler's merciless attitude, but, as a rapper, he also resembles the kidnapped girlfriend, squealing for cash. Part of what makes “D'evils” compelling is this sense that Jay-Z's persona—his professionalism—might be at odds with his profession. The first verse described d'evils as a criminal compunction; now it seems more like a narrative compunction—a disease that makes you talk too much.

If Jay-Z's skill accounts for his reputation, and his practical approach to marketing his skill accounts for his success, then his ability to sense what his audience wants to hear before his audience senses it—to tell stories that don't just demand belief but inspire it—accounts for his longevity. A few times a year, there's a meeting in the Def Jam offices to decide what the next Jay-Z single and music video will be. Last year, after the release of “Vol. 3 . . . Life and Times of S. Carter,” none of the executives could decide what single to release. The obvious choice was “Things That You Do,” because it fea-

tured the pop singer Mariah Carey, but Kevin Liles, the president of Def Jam, thought it was "too mainstream." Then support started building for "Big Pimpin'," an unlikely candidate—its beat sounded North African, and it lacked a sung hook, which is generally considered essential for a hip-hop single. Liles, a convivial, round-faced man, and an energetic storyteller, recalled the conversation: "Jay said, 'It's a movement: This is how you big pimp.' I said, 'I don't know, Jay.' He said, 'Nah, we gotta do a video. We gotta show people what big pimping is all about. Let's make the movement.' So I said, 'Let's go, let's do it.' And the rest is history." The "movement" they created was this: Jay-Z on an enormous yacht some-

where warm, drinking champagne with women in swimsuits, and rapping about a life of sex and cash. As he put it:

On a canopy my stamina be
enough for Pamela Anderson Lee.
MTV, "Jam of the Week."
Made my money quick then back to the
streets.

The video cemented Jay-Z's reputation as hip-hop's smoothest hustler, and "big pimpin'" became slang for living large; Jay-Z even made a follow-up song, "Parking Lot Pimpin'."

Expensive cars, yachts, champagne, and jewelry are everywhere in contemporary rap songs and videos. While hip-hop was once attacked for what was perceived as political rage, it has now given critics a different sin to excoriate:

greed, or "bling bling" (after a song that asked, "What kinda nigga got diamonds that'll—bling!—blind ya?"). Last year, *Newsweek* ran a cover story that announced, "Welcome to the bling-bling generation." Hip-hop, the article claimed, had become "a Frankenstein's monster—with fifty thousand dollars worth of white gold draped over its neck pegs." (In fact, this characterization is inaccurate: most major rappers disdain white gold, considering it inferior to platinum.) Ever since the Sugarhill Gang rhymed about having "more money than a sucker could ever spend," it's been clear that hip-hop isn't an ascetic culture, and in the late nineteen-nineties it became more infatuated than ever with earning power and spending habits.

"When everybody else was doing gold," Jay-Z says, "I was, like, 'I want something platinum.' And then seeing the whole world switch—the whole world, you know what I'm saying? For a kid from Marcy? No one can take that away from me." In hip-hop, achievement comes down to style: life style, musical style, rhyme style. Jay-Z has moved out of the Marcy projects and into a penthouse apartment in Fort Lee, New Jersey (rich rappers inevitably move to the suburbs, for safety and privacy), which has a view of the Manhattan skyline and a private screening room. Roc-A-Fella Films has made a distribution deal with Miramax, and Rocawear, available at Macy's, among other places, has replaced Phat Farm and Fubu as New York's most visible brand. Jay-Z's latest hit, "I Just Wanna Love U (Give It 2 Me)," was a champagne-fuelled celebration song inspired by a birthday party for Kimora Simmons, the wife of Def Jam's co-founder Russell Simmons. But, despite all his big-money rhymes and real-life wealth, Jay-Z has never once described what champagne tastes like. His is the pleasure of a man obsessed with status (he recently called himself a "status-tician"), rather than the simpler pleasure of a hedonist.

Hippies and punk rockers used to talk about artists "selling out," chasing money at the expense of art. As the years passed, rockers got not only older but richer, and their newfound wealth was, inevitably, a bit of an embarrassment, or, at any rate, an absurdity: a



"I still have to demand, 'Who goes there? Is it friend or foe?'"

rich society guy in late middle age singing about being a "Street Fighting Man." Rappers, on the other hand, don't sell out; they "fall off"—that is, they lose their artistic credibility and their financial viability at the same time. Punks (and their descendants in the world of underground rock) were afraid that big audiences and big money would ruin their subculture of authenticity, but in hip-hop success is a form of validation—a rapper's riches are proof that he's good at what he does. Platinum jewelry and platinum plaques are metaphors for artistic achievement, not just commercial success. It's hard to imagine a major rapper refusing to make a video at the height of his career, the way Pearl Jam did. In hip-hop, stories are either convincing or they're not; when a rapper loses his power to convince, it's usually a failure not of authenticity but of rhetoric. Jay-Z will be a master criminal and a brilliant business mind and a great rapper until people stop believing him.

Jay-Z's recent arrests have given him new material. He has even made a music video, for a song called "Guilty Until Proven Innocent," loosely based on the stabbing of Lance (Un) Rivera, in which he takes the witness stand, delivers a defiant defense, and celebrates his acquittal. But on a spring morning in a Manhattan courthouse, where Jay-Z was attending a scheduling hearing in the Rivera case, the discrepancy between Jay-Z the rapper and Shawn Carter the defendant couldn't have been clearer: being on trial mainly means keeping your mouth shut, in the courtroom and outside it, and that's exactly what Jay-Z did.

I arrived just in time to see Jay-Z sprinting up the steps to meet one of his lawyers, Murray Richman. It was the first time I'd seen him without a flock of handlers and bodyguards and managers and friends trailing him. I passed through the metal detector with Jay-Z and Richman, and as we got to the elevators Jay-Z turned around and looked at me, not quite smiling. "What's going on?" he said.

It was not a day of high legal drama. The court date was a mere formality—a request for a postponement. There were only half a dozen other

people in the courtroom; no reporters, no fans.

Jay-Z sat alone at a small desk before the bench, dressed in a Rocawear T-shirt and Rocawear jeans. The hearing took almost no time: the lawyers stepped forward and murmured to the judge. The judge murmured back, one hand over the microphone. Richman smiled broadly and said, "Thank you so much." The postponement had been granted, and Jay-Z strode out of the courtroom. A few weeks later, a publicist from Def Jam called me. She told me that for "legal reasons" Jay-Z wouldn't talk to me anymore.

As Jay-Z's lawyers would be the first to tell you, rapping about crime doesn't make you a great criminal. By the same token, rapping about money doesn't make you a great businessman. Jay-Z is a part owner of Rocawear and Roc-A-Fella Films, but Damon Dash takes most of the meetings himself. "If I gotta bring Jay, that mean we got a problem," he says. Jay-Z is more actively involved in Roc-A-Fella Records, which he intends to establish as hip-hop's ruling family. In recent years, realizing, perhaps, that his own career won't last forever, he has been shilling for Roc-A-Fella at every turn. "Y'all niggas truly ain't ready for this dynasty thing / Y'all thinking Blake Carrington, I'm thinking more like Ming," he rapped in a recent song. And yet he has had a rough time with his protégés: Amil, a young female rapper, left the Roc-A-Fella stable shortly after releasing a poorly received debut album last year, and Memphis Bleek, a Marcy-projects alumnus, hasn't quite found his own style or marketing niche. Jay-Z's most promising protégé is Beanie Sigel, a hard-bitten twenty-seven-year-old, who is as forthcoming as Jay-Z is guarded. "My style is crack houses in South Philly," Beanie says. "That's where most of my life was written."

The first time I heard "The Reason," Beanie Sigel's new album, I was sitting in an S.U.V. that was hazy with marijuana smoke. Half a dozen of Beanie's friends and handlers were nodding their heads in unison, and Beanie himself was rapping along, offering running commentary: "Yo, we in church right



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"We were dog people when we met—what happened?"

now—this one make you get the Holy Ghost." His first album had been uneven, but "The Reason" is one of the year's best, full of verses knotted with syllables:

Crack topic: back block it, thirty-one long
blacktop it, you can't stop it, Gat top it,
black Mack, black Glock it, blast rocket,
sit your faggot-ass on your back pocket.

Sitting in a deserted pool hall in Chelsea later that night, Beanie recalled the day that a friend of a friend got him an audition with Jay-Z. "Meeting Jay was like meeting the perfect hustler," he said. "It was like being a young kid on the block, when a dude drive up in a big Caddy and throw you the keys, like, 'Park the car, shorty.' It was like meeting that guy."

Along with most of his hip-hop contemporaries, Beanie Sigel has internalized the rules of corporate rap—he explained to me that you have to have a "good marketing plan" when you're "selling your product," whether it's music or crack. And yet he doesn't come across like a C.E.O. If Jay-Z is a salesman, then Beanie Sigel is a product, a charismatic hustler who senses that part of his appeal is his roughness (he described himself as "all edges, all the way around, three-sixty"), a slick talker whose style emphasizes wordplay over plain speech.

(He even answered some of my questions in rhyme.)

The new corporate rapper is intensely self-aware. Eminem has rhymed, with seeming amusement, about being a "commodity." One of rap's new stars calls himself Ludacris. Even Master P has recognized this changing atmosphere: his own career has slowed down, and his empire has fallen apart, but he's found new success through his son, an eleven-year-old rap star named Lil' Romeo. Maybe, after four years of corporate rap, the obsession with businessmen is turning into an obsession with products.

Fifteen years ago, a rapper might have called himself a "microphone controller" or a "rhyme animal"—epithets that called attention to lyrical skill. Today, rappers distract listeners from the fact that there's any rapping going on at all, claiming to be pimps and thugs and cocaine dealers and businessmen and leaders and commodities. "Where I'm from, it wasn't cool to be a rapper," Beanie Sigel told me. "If you was a rapper, you was a sucker, straight up. So I kept it under my hat. I'd say, 'Nah, man, I ain't no rapper.'"

Beanie Sigel's disavowal of rapping reminded me of something I'd heard before. Later that night, I pulled out his first album and confirmed a hunch: there's a moment early on when Beanie

tries to get rid of a fan by sneering, "I ain't no fucking rapper," as if he wished it were true. You can hear the same ambivalence in Jay-Z's willingness to sacrifice complex rhymes for a good beat, in his insistence that "without rap I was crazy straight," and in his half-serious threats of retirement: "Back to Shawn Carter the hustler, Jay-Z is dead." The success of corporate rap has inspired a kind of self-loathing among rappers, who have begun to suspect that rapping itself is beneath them; if the hip-hop boom is drawing to a close, it can't be said that the rappers didn't see it coming.

It would be somehow fitting if rappers, who made d.j.s obsolete, ended by talking themselves into obsolescence, unable to compete with their own tall tales. You get the feeling that some rappers envy Shakur and the Notorious B.I.G., who were killed mid-act, immortalized in character. Jay-Z has been talking about retirement ever since he released his first album, which he also claimed would be his last. He wasn't planning to be a rapper all his life, and he certainly wasn't planning to stay in the game long enough to fall off. He said that, having established himself as the consummate smooth criminal, he would move on—back, perhaps, to the streets. Like a gangster looking for one last big score, or a corporate boss angling for a lucrative buyout, he dreamed of quitting while he was ahead, of getting out before he was pushed out. That's what the sound of "Big Pimpin'" is—a celebration before the falloff.

Rapping as a means to a financial end: this is the narrative of the era of corporate hip-hop. Strangely, it's kept hip-hop interesting and exciting, because it has forced rappers to find new ways to talk about themselves, new ways to tell their stories. But for Jay-Z it poses a question: If you're so good, why are you still rapping? As he prepares to release his sixth album in six years, he sounds apologetic. "Can't leave rap alone, the game needs me," he explains in his new single, and it's true, for now. It won't be true forever. ♦

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Erica Feidner knows the piano you want.

BY JAMES B. STEWART

Erica Feidner has a gift. Not, perhaps, the gift her father was hoping for when he woke her every weekday morning at four-thirty to practice the piano. Or when he put his thirteen-year-old daughter on a bus for the four-hundred-mile round trip from their home, in Bennington, Vermont, to the Juilliard School, in Manhattan. But it is a gift nonetheless. No one who experiences it seems to forget it.

Glady Faires, of Knoxville, Tennessee, met Feidner at the Steinway & Sons showroom on West Fifty-seventh Street in Manhattan, where Feidner is a salesperson. An amateur pianist, Faires

already owned a Steinway grand, as well as a piano by the fabled Austrian maker Bösendorfer, but she wasn't especially happy with either instrument. The Bösendorfer had been a gift from her husband, so she hadn't chosen it herself, and the other piano had been, at the time, the only Steinway grand for sale in Knoxville, so she hadn't been able to compare it with others. The tone was too dark and sombre for her taste. She was looking for something with a brighter, more cheerful sound, and she was hoping Feidner could help her find it.

Steinway Hall, as the showroom is called, was built in 1925; it contains an

ornate Beaux-Arts room decorated with paintings of Schubert, Berlioz, Mendelssohn, and Rubinstein and illuminated by a massive crystal chandelier hanging from a domed ceiling. In the center of the space stands a single piano, usually a nine-foot Model D in an ebonized finish—the company's signature concert grand, with the distinctive Steinway & Sons logo in gold on its side.

Almost every twentieth-century virtuoso has passed through this room en route to Steinway's Concert and Artists Department, housed in the basement, where he or she can select a concert grand for performances at Carnegie Hall, across the street. Feidner and five other salespeople have desks on the periphery of the room. Despite their presence, there is a hushed atmosphere, like that of a cathedral or a museum, punctuated only now and then by the distant, cascading notes of a Chopin étude. Oddly, the phones never seem to ring.

Steinway Hall is by now so rich in history and symbolism that no one would



When Feidner renounced a concert career, her father was devastated. Could the breach be healed? Photograph by Elliott Erwitt.

dare change it, though company executives worry that it is intimidating to many potential piano buyers. But, like most of Feidner's clients, Faires found herself quickly at ease in the formal surroundings. Feidner is about five feet four, very slender, and strikingly attractive, but it was her ready laugh, her high energy, and her contagious enthusiasm for the piano which enveloped Faires. Before looking at any instruments, the two sat at Feidner's desk and spent more than an hour discussing Faires's tastes in music, her level of experience, where she would be using the piano, how often it would be played, what kind of response she wanted, even how and when she would use the piano's pedal mechanism. Faires stressed that she wanted an instrument with a bright tone, one that was very "forgiving" to the player, for use in a second home in Hilton Head, South Carolina. She liked to play all kinds of music, from classical to pop. When they were finished, Feidner took a piece of paper and wrote down a six-digit number, which meant nothing to Faires.

Then Feidner led Faires to the pianos, through a long corridor that functions almost as a museum of the piano and has had on display, among other artifacts, the upright Steinway bought by John Lennon in 1979, and then into the showrooms, most of them wood-paneled, with more portraits, more chandeliers, and Chippendale furniture.

On a typical day, Steinway Hall holds up to three hundred pianos, seventy-five per cent of them grands—the largest concentration of Steinway pianos in the world. Customers can buy pianos from a network of Steinway dealers in major United States cities, but in recent years production has fallen short of demand; in Los Angeles, there was a period last year when the dealer had no Steinway grands in stock. As one of only six company-owned stores (others are in London, Hamburg, Berlin, and Munich), Steinway Hall gets priority.

After explaining various technical aspects of the Steinway, Feidner urged Faires to play. Like many amateur pianists, Faires is shy about playing and hates to perform. She said she would rather listen to Feidner play, so that she could hear what the pianos sounded like from a distance. Feidner was sympathetic but firm—there could be no sub-

stitute for Faires's playing the piano herself—and left the room, so Faires could play alone.

When Feidner returned, though, she relented, and sat down at the piano herself. She began playing a Chopin nocturne. She seemed momentarily transported, playing from memory, her eyes half closed, her concentration intense. But she stopped abruptly, and resumed the conversation.

Successful piano salespeople aren't necessarily accomplished pianists. Most can play at least a little, but it's not an occupational necessity, or even something Steinway looks for in a prospective salesperson. Still, Feidner's playing stood out. Faires wondered if she had been a concert artist. Even in the brief Chopin excerpt, Feidner seemed to have the expressive power of a professional pianist.

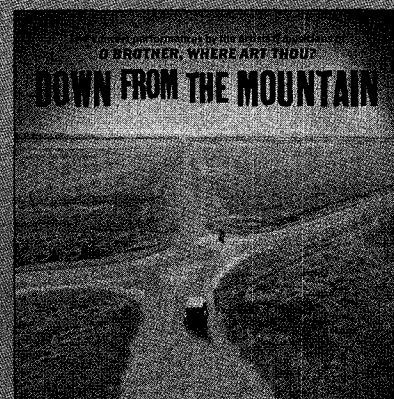
Then, as Feidner led her around the room, Faires tried out one piano after another—more than a dozen in all. She said that the one she liked best was a five-foot-eleven-inch Model L. "Do you love it?" Feidner asked. In truth, Faires had been a little disappointed in the tone. It was not quite the bright, singing sound she had hoped for. "I have one more," Feidner said, explaining that a piano had just arrived from the factory and was still in the basement being serviced. Feidner had played the piano that morning. "I'll have it brought up," she said. Fifteen minutes later, the instrument was ready. Faires sat at the keyboard. As she began to play, her spirits soared. This piano had the cheerful sound the others had lacked. It was forgiving. It was as if someone at Steinway, in making the piano, had built it to her exact specifications. When she turned to Feidner, she didn't have to say anything. They both knew the piano was sold.

"Look at the serial number," Feidner told her. Faires found the series of numbers stamped on the iron frame just inside the rim. Then Feidner produced the piece of paper on which she had written some numbers at the end of their interview. They were the same.

Feidner, who is thirty-seven, has been the top salesperson in the Steinway organization since 1994, and in 1999 alone her sales netted four million dollars. "We don't know anyone who has done what Erica has done," Frank Mazurco, the head of sales and marketing

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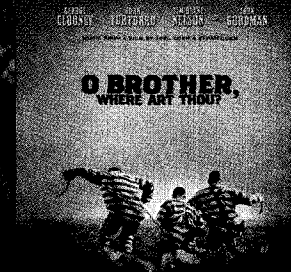
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and a former salesperson, told me on a recent visit to Steinway Hall. "If only we could clone her. How does she do it?" Mazurco paused to think, and mentioned a few characteristics of people who succeed in selling pianos. (An enthusiasm for the Steinway product certainly helps.) But then he shrugged. "We just don't know." Like the sound of a great piano, he said, "it's something intangible that makes her unique."

It is not unusual for Feidner's customers to describe her as a force of nature. This is not because they feel pressured by her but because after they meet her many soon find themselves in the grip of musical ambitions they never knew they harbored. These ambitions often include buying a specific piano that they feel they can no longer live without, even if it strains both their living rooms and their bank accounts.

I know that feeling. One winter afternoon, I walked into Steinway with no appointment and was referred to Feidner. (Walk-ins are assigned in rotation to the available salespeople.) On a first visit, Steinway Hall is indeed intimidating, and I felt half apologetic for taking up Feidner's time. But I was soon confiding my musical aspirations. I hadn't studied the piano since I graduated from high school, but I still played for fun. I had moved into an apartment large enough

for a grand piano, something I'd dreamed of owning since fifth grade, when I began taking lessons, and I was close to buying a used seven-foot Yamaha that I'd been testing for several weeks. I thought I should at least compare it with a Steinway, but I had no intention of buying anything so expensive.

I had brought along some Schubert piano pieces, and, at Feidner's insistence, I played many pianos, including new ones, even though they were flagrantly beyond my stated price range—more than twice as expensive as the Yamaha. Then she steered me into a smaller room of used pianos, upstairs from the main showroom, and left me alone. Two ebonized six-foot-eleven-inch Model Bs stood side by side, and I began to play. I don't recall how much time passed. I had never played pianos like these. At some point, Feidner quietly reappeared. She complimented me on my playing and asked if I'd considered taking lessons. She said she could suggest some teachers who might be appropriate for me. I thanked her and left as quickly as I could.

The next day I was back, with more music. I tried some Debussy preludes. Swept up in my own playing, I didn't think to ask Feidner to play, and, apart from sounding out a few chords and scales, she didn't volunteer.

A few days later, I returned again.

Feidner and I discussed the tone, the action, the pedigree of the two pianos I liked, and, finally, the price, which was plainly marked on sales tags attached to them. I said I couldn't afford them and asked about a discount. Feidner said that Steinway doesn't discount. But she showed me a monthly payment plan with below-market-rate financing. On a monthly basis, it didn't look so bad, I decided.

When I came back the following week, I had become such a regular visitor that I just waved to Feidner and went upstairs. But something in the room was different. The pianos had been rearranged. The two pianos I loved were no longer side by side. I raced to ask Feidner what had happened. "It sold," she said, referring to the slightly brighter, more aggressive of the two instruments.

I had all but forgotten that this was the point of the Steinway showroom. I was shocked that something so expensive had been bought by someone else, evidently on impulse. Mercifully, the other piano had been spared.

Feidner had earlier asked me if I wanted to make a small down payment to reserve one of the pianos, an offer I had rebuffed as too much of a commitment. Now I practically begged her to take my check.

Feidner smiled. She explained that she knew I would fall in love with it when she saw me carrying the Schubert score. His music calls for an instrument with a warm, rich, even, singing tone across the full range of the piano; a long sustain and an action that can produce legato passages; and a dynamic range from hushed triple-piano to fervent double-forte. I wasn't an experienced enough pianist to know this at the time, but Feidner did, and, consciously or not, I had responded to these qualities in the instrument.

Some months later, I ran into the saleswoman who had nearly sold me the Yamaha. "What did you decide?" she asked. I told her I had bought a Steinway. "You made the right choice," she said.

Erica van der Linde first came to Steinway Hall when she was ten years old, on her first visit to New York City. Her parents drove her from Bennington, where her father, Reinhold, was



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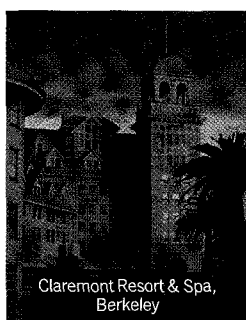
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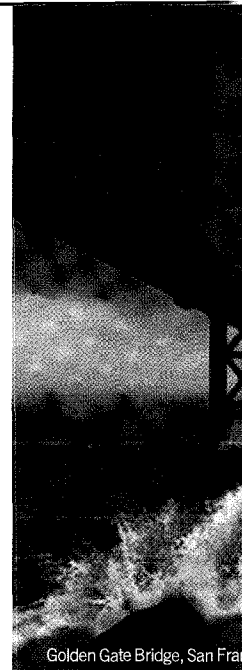
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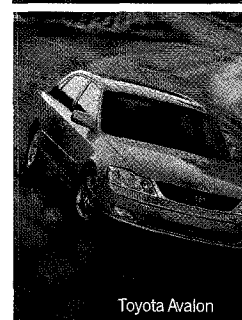
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South of Santa Cruz, picturesque **Monterey** and quaint **Carmel-by-the-Sea** offer great walking and bike paths, shopping, art galleries, dining and lodging. **Pebble Beach's 17-Mile Drive** passes some of the most photographed seascapes

in America. It's tough to miss **Morro Rock**, an enormous (576-foot) volcanic peak. You'll want to get out and explore this unusual natural habitat on foot in **Morro Bay State Park**. Take time to breathe in the fresh coastal mountain air in the **Ojai Valley** and stop in lovely **Santa Barbara** before hitting the end of the road in Los Angeles. Continue your journey on the water aboard Princess Cruises' new **Star Princess** to the Mexican Riviera (800-PRINCESS). Delight in lush mountain jungles, quaint fishing villages and the chic seaside resorts of **Puerto Vallarta**, **Mazatlán** and **Cabo San Lucas** before returning to Los Angeles. With the most extensive shore excursion programs in the country, **Star Princess** is simply the biggest, newest and best ship to the Mexican Riviera.



Golden Gate Bridge, San Fran



Toyota Avalon

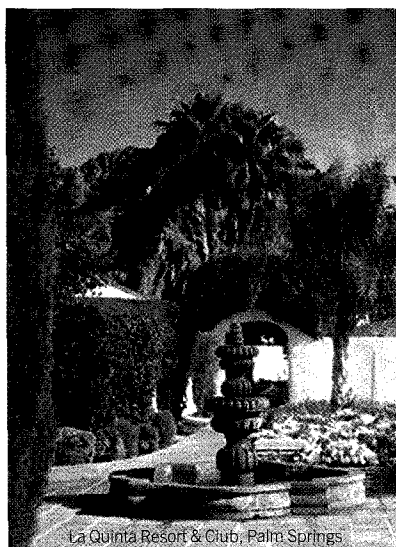


Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

Itinerary 2

GO WEST

Set sail from **Los Angeles** on the cruise of your dreams along the California coast to the **Mexican Riviera**. Princess Cruises' Personal Choice CruisingSM gives new meaning to the term "cruise control," offering unprecedented dining and entertainment



La Quinta Resort & Club, Palm Springs

options to personalize the perfect getaway just for you. After seven days in paradise, you'll arrive back in the **City of Angels**, where beautiful weather and beautiful people give you the perfect excuse to slip into a sporty **Toyota Camry Solara Convertible** and put the top down. Cruise L.A.'s **Sunset Strip**, stop off at **Mann's World Famous Chinese Theater** (818-784-6266)

on Hollywood Boulevard, shop the ultra-deluxe boutiques on **Rodeo Drive** and explore the elite neighborhood of **Beverly Hills**. From there, escape, like many others before you, to legendary celebrity getaway, **Palm Springs**. Just a three hour drive by car, a stunning desert oasis awaits. Unpack and unwind at the distinctive **La Quinta Resort & Club** (800-598-3828), a favorite among celebrities and discerning travelers for its intimate accommodations, gourmet dining, indulgent spa treatments, and endless outdoor activities. If you're looking to spend time on the green, tee off at nearby **PGA West** (800-PGA-WEST), home to world-class courses including the famed TPC Stadium Course by Pete Dye, the new Greg Norman Course and the Jack Nicklaus Tournament Course. Bask in the glow of the region's sunny skies as you marvel at the majestic mountains in the distance. With so much to see and do, you'll never want to leave.



Acapulco, Mexico

Itinerary 3

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

Kick off your Southern adventure with a healthy dose of that famous local hospitality. Indulge yourself with a stay at the elegant **Emerald Pointe Resort at Lake Lanier Islands** (800-768-LAKE), a five-island, 1,100-acre hideaway, before heading south to Atlanta. As you tour through the city in the elegant comfort of your **Toyota Avalon** (visit toyota.com), be sure to stop at the **Atlanta Botanical Garden** (404-876-5859); the **CNN Studio** (877-4CNN-TOUR), for an insider's view of the newsroom; and the **Martin Luther King Jr. Historic District**, a four-block area where the civil rights leader was born and raised. Further south, don't miss the quaint town of **Macon** or the opportunity to tour **Hay House** (478-742-8155), a 19th century mansion known as the "Palace of the South." Pass gallant antebellum mansions and



Emerald Pointe Resort, Lake Lanier

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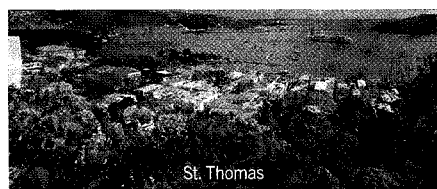


Savannah

await you. Then climb aboard the **Grand Princess** for a seven-day getaway in the glorious Western Caribbean. Swim in the crystal clear waters of the **Cayman Islands**, explore the ancient Mayan ruins near **Cozumel** and take in an underwater adventure on the **Chinchorro Reef** off Costa Maya. Be sure to check off everything on your wish list by pre-booking shore excursions through your travel agent or online at princess.com.



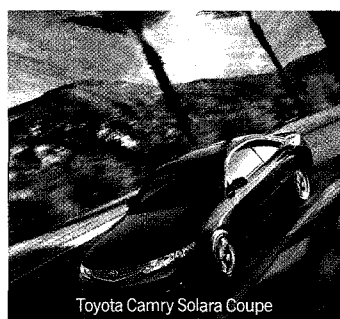
Underwater in the Caribbean Sea



St. Thomas

Itinerary 4

HOT, HOT, HOT



Toyota Camry Solara Coupe

The sun isn't the only thing sizzling in **Miami**—especially when you are riding in the sleek and powerful **Toyota Camry Solara Coupe**. Feel the city's pulsing beat on **Ocean Drive**, the bustling stretch of sidewalk cafés and palm-dotted beachfront in the heart of happening **South Beach**. Just

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considered "The Kingdom of Golf," and is renowned as one of America's top-tiered destination resorts. It will put you in the perfect frame of mind and body for a luxurious cruise to ports like **St. Maarten** and **St. Thomas**. Thanks to Personal Choice CruisingSM, Princess' seven-day cruise to the **Caribbean** includes everything your heart desires. Choose from an ocean of things to do and a boatload of ways to relax and be entertained. Whatever you do, don't miss a day at the beach on **Princess Cays**, the cruise line's own private island (800-PRINCESS or princess.com).

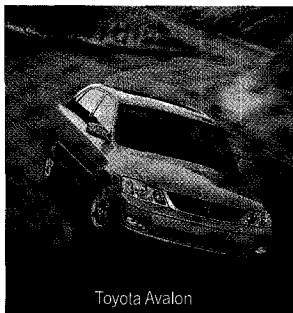


Doral Golf Resort and Spa, Miami

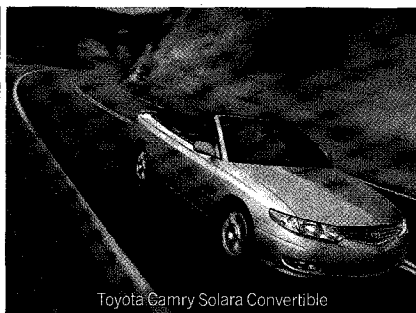


Miami by Night

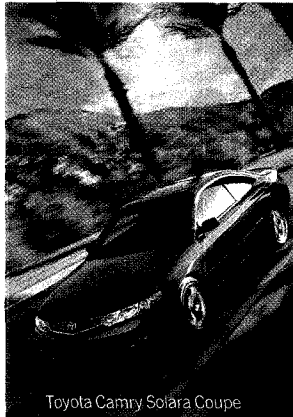
Get Behind the Wheel



Toyota Avalon



Toyota Camry Solara Convertible



Toyota Camry Solara Coupe

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*For more information on Princess Cruises, call your travel agent or contact Princess Cruises directly by phone at 800-PRINCESS or online at princess.com.

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Princess Cruise to the Caribbean



Grand Wailea Resort Hotel & Spa

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a professor of mathematics at Bennington College, and her mother, Rosamond, taught piano and was the president of the Vermont Music Teachers' Association. Her father was also a talented musician, playing oboe, organ, and piano, and had studied in his native Holland.

The youngest of four daughters, Erica, like her sisters, had begun studying piano at the age of three. Along with her oldest sister, Polly, she showed unusual promise. When she was seven, her father began giving her lessons and coaching her in the classical repertoire. By the time she was nine, she was assisting her mother by giving lessons of her own. At ten, on the visit to New York, she auditioned for Juilliard's Pre-College Division, where she was accepted and awarded a scholarship. At eleven, she made her debut with the Vermont Symphony, playing a Haydn concerto.

Rein, as her father was known, had immigrated to America at the end of the Second World War with a dollar-fifty in his pocket. Handsome and outgoing, he worked his way through college, earned a Ph.D. in mathematics at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and married Erica's mother, who was one of his students at Bennington. Although the van der Linde family struggled to make ends meet, they lived in a large, rambling house in Bennington and owned twenty-six pianos. Each morning, the daughters rose at four-thirty for an hour or two of practice. They all studied other instruments as well—in Erica's case, the violin and the viola. As soon as they got home from school, they resumed practicing or helped their mother teach. When not playing and practicing, they learned Dutch from their father, and they often spoke it at home. One night a week, each of the daughters was responsible for preparing the family dinner. They also babysat for their younger brother, Tiaan. During the summer, their parents ran a piano camp called Summer Sonatina. Sometimes there were scores of young pianists in the house, and the van der Linde children all worked to help keep the camp running. "It was a boot camp," Erica remembers.

Every day was a potential adventure. Rein took them sailing, and Erica proved to be an avid fisherman. They bought land in New Brunswick, where, every summer, the family camped in tents, made dinner over a fire, and then heated stones

to warm their beds. Eventually, they moved an old house there and restored it, doing almost all the work themselves.

But music remained the focus of the family's life, and Erica "was always the prodigy," according to her sister Amy. At an early family recital, when Erica was six or seven, held in the church where Rein was the organist and Rosamond the choir director, Amy heard Erica, fourteen months younger, play "The Bear," by Vladimir Rebikov, a piece in which both hands play in the bass clef. It was obvious to Amy that she could never keep pace with Erica. "I was upset," she says. "I didn't want to perform. I hated it. Later, I found other things I enjoyed." All the children were entered into numerous musical competitions, but it was Erica who most often won. Her parents sat in the audience, taking copious notes. "Thank God it wasn't me," Amy says now. "They wanted us to be professional musicians. Erica bore the brunt of this."

Erica moved from one triumph to another. She played a Mozart concerto and a Mendelssohn concerto in return engagements with the Vermont Symphony. At seventeen, she won a competitive audition and played the Beethoven Choral Symphony with the Albany Symphony. She studied piano with Daniel Epstein, played a brilliant junior recital, and earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from SUNY Purchase. "We all just assumed that Erica would be a concert pianist," Amy says.

When Erica was a sophomore in college, she saw a television ad for the Miss America pageant, which stressed the money available for scholarships. Unbeknownst to her parents, Erica had been plotting ways to buy a piano and live on her own after she graduated from college, and the pageant seemed to offer the means. She entered as a contestant from Bellows Falls, Vermont, a town of three thousand people. For the talent competition, she played a Liszt concert étude, "Forest Murmurs," on a small upright piano, and advanced to the state finals, held in a high-school gym in Middlebury. Miss America—the former Miss Utah, Sharlene Wells—was on hand to crown the winner. Erica's parents were somewhat taken aback by this unexpected turn in their daughter's career, but they attended the pageant.

Erica was one of five finalists. When the fourth runner-up was announced, Erica heard her name and came forward. Then there was a shuffling of ballots and someone announced that a mistake had been made. The list of names had been read backward. Erica was the new Miss Vermont.

She was awarded thirty-five hundred dollars, a ski pass, and a fake-fur coat. She had given little thought to the actual duties of her new position. Shortly after the pageant, she was asked to crown the dairy princess in a county near the Canadian border. Wearing her gown and tiara, Erica was pulled in a cart by live oxen through the streets of Enosburg Falls, ending up ringed by Port-O-Sans in the muddy field of a local hog farmer. There, as the dairy-princess contestants and their families looked on and a cold rain fell, she performed the "Forest Murmurs" on a badly tuned upright.

Four months later, Erica stepped onto the stage in Atlantic City. She had had no coaching before the pageant. She had bought a sequined evening gown for five dollars after spotting it hanging from a tree at a yard sale. In the swimsuit competition, she felt nearly invisible next to some of her long-legged, big-bosomed, blond rivals. Nevertheless, Erica was considered a contender, because she had won a preliminary talent competition, and talent counts for a sizable percentage of the outcome. Eight seconds of her performance (the "Forest Murmurs" again) was broadcast on national television. But as she walked down the runway in her evening gown she stumbled and lost a shoe. She was not among the ten finalists.

Still, Erica had won three thousand dollars in the talent competition, and with the money she set out to buy a piano and resume her concert career. Over her parents' objections, she moved to New York with her boyfriend, Eric Feidner, a French-horn player she'd met in college. She found a used Steinway Model S, the company's smallest grand, for five thousand dollars. It was more than she could afford, but she fell in love. Using her contest winnings, she borrowed the balance from her teacher and a sister and bought the piano. She paid them back by giving piano lessons, and auditioned for the master's program at Juilliard, playing Schubert's demanding "Wanderer Fantasy." In a concert that

brought special pride to her family, she performed the Bach triple-keyboard concerto with the Vermont Symphony, with her father and her sister Polly at the other pianos.

After the concert, she and Eric went skiing. Erica fell, and said her hand hurt. But she kept skiing. She fell again. Her hand hurt so much that Eric took her to the emergency room of the local hospital. When she emerged from the hospital, her hand was in a cast; she had torn a ligament in the thumb. For the first time since she was a young child, Erica could not play the piano.

She remembers that moment. She felt immense relief: a burden had been lifted. Ever since her performance with the Albany Symphony, for which she had felt inadequately prepared, she had doubted her abilities and the strength of her commitment. Seven hours a day of practice had been lonely and seemingly never-ending. Despite her early success, she suspected that she would never make it into the top ranks of the world's concert pianists. After a lifetime of immersion in classical music, "I felt trapped," she recalls. "I had no other strengths." She wondered if the falls on the ski slope were unconsciously deliberate. The accident, Erica now says, gave her the excuse she needed to abandon a concert career.

Erica was not the first van der Linde child to fall short of her parents' musical ambitions. Tasha, the second daughter, became a successful model. Amy worked briefly in construction. Tiaan sailed in the summer and worked on ski trails in the winter. But Erica's decision may have been the most painful. She quit playing completely, even after her hand healed. She sold her teaching practice. Amy recalls that the family was shocked and disappointed, feeling that a great talent was being wasted. "It was hard for me—it was hard for all of us, but especially my father," Amy says. He would try to get Erica to play something on visits to Vermont. She refused. Eventually, he gave up. He never overtly criticized Erica's decision, but his silence underscored his disappointment. As Erica started a new life in New York, she and her father grew apart.

Like her father, and like many other talented musicians, Erica had an aptitude for math. She enrolled in business

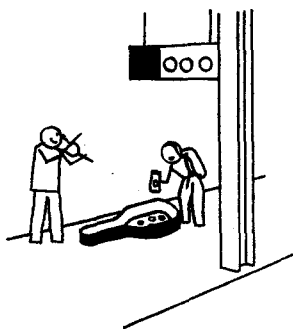
school at Baruch College, in Manhattan, and found a part-time job selling Bösendorfer pianos at a Manhattan dealer. After she graduated, in 1992, she moved to Steinway.

Erica's performance skills languished. She tried to avoid playing for customers. When someone insisted, she played as briefly as possible. Customers may have been impressed when they heard Erica play, but they had no way of knowing how painful the experience was for her.

At home, Erica's Miss America piano, as she called it, sat untouched, a silent, nagging monument to her past.

Blindfolded, a person would find it hard to believe that all the pianos in the Steinway showroom bear the Steinway name, so different is each piano's tone, touch, feel, and resulting sound. Some of this is the natural variation in any handmade product consisting of more than twelve thousand moving parts. Some of it comes from the varying resonant characteristics of different pieces of wood, even from the same species of tree. All Steinways have Sitka-spruce soundboards, pine ribs, and rims made from up to eighteen layers of hard-rock maple, but the evenness of the grain and the dryness and age of the wood can produce significant variations in sound. These can easily be heard by reaching into the piano, plucking the strings, and listening to the resulting tone and the speed with which the sound becomes inaudible—the sustain time. A tone that seems to hang in the air indicates a piano with an ability to sustain, a quality that is prized by Steinway, but one that even some Steinway pianos lack.

Feidner readily concedes that some Steinways are inferior. But, contrary to rumors that seem to have begun after Steinway & Sons was acquired by CBS, in 1972, this is not because newer Steinways are not as good as older ones. In



1962, Steinway replaced felt bushings, which surround the pins, with Teflon bushings. This sparked some criticism, and in 1982 Steinway returned to felt. But the piano expert Larry Fine, writing in the most recent edition of "The Piano Book," described such concerns as having been "magnified" by bad press at the time and states that "most technicians feel that Steinway grands, properly serviced, are among the best-performing pianos—if not *the* best—made." CBS sold Steinway in 1985, and the company is now public, trading on the New York Stock Exchange. Within the past two years, Steinway has acquired its European supplier of piano keys and its American manufacturer of cast-iron plates, to insure supply and quality. Steinway points to such capital investment in defending the pianos' quality as the best it has ever been.

In fact, Steinway has no desire to produce instruments that are essentially interchangeable, like those of many of the Asian manufacturers, who achieve consistency by relying on machine, rather than human, labor. Much of the variation readily discernible in a visit to the showroom is deliberate. The sound of a piano is produced by a wooden hammer, covered in felt, that strikes a group of two or three strings strung to a high degree of tension. Steinway uses a relatively soft felt, which produces a mellower, softer sound, with richer harmonic overtones. In time, as the hammers repeatedly strike the strings, their surface firms, so that the sound of an older Steinway may be more brilliant and percussive than that of a new one. In a process known as voicing, technicians may add chemicals to the felt to harden the surface, achieving the same effect. Or the felt may be pricked to produce small holes, which will soften the sound. Many pianos require that both methods be used to produce an even sound across their range. But voicing is far more than a mechanical process. It blends artistry and craft to coax the finest sound possible from each piano. The resulting wide variations mean that Steinway can produce a piano for nearly every musical taste, but when no two pianos sound alike finding the perfect piano can be a bewildering experience.

The Manhattan literary agent Joe

Regal came to Steinway Hall looking for a small grand piano, not because he really wanted a small piano but because that was what he could afford. As he explained to Feidner in their initial interview, he had studied piano, and had even been accepted at Juilliard, but he hadn't played in thirteen years. He and his wife were moving from Manhattan to a house in New Jersey, so he felt they had room for a larger piano, and he wanted to play again. Feidner took Regal to a five-foot-one-inch Model S, Steinway's smallest grand, and he began testing it by playing the Brahms G-Minor Rhapsody.

The Brahms rhapsody was a revealing choice. Brahms himself must have possessed an exceptional piano, because so many of his compositions celebrate the deep bass notes of the instrument—an area that exposes the weaknesses of most pianos, especially small ones. Dark, moody, and passionate, the rhapsody lives in the deepest reaches of the piano, calling for a low A, the standard piano's lowest note, at a climactic moment. Feidner quickly suggested that they move to larger pianos, whose richer bass tones are produced by much longer strings. It was only when they reached a six-eleven Model B that Regal began to hear what he wanted. Even then, he felt that the deep tones weren't "singing."

The instant he used the word "singing," Feidner said, "I have the perfect piano for you." She led him upstairs to a room with five enormous, nine-foot Model Ds, the Steinway concert grands, and directed him to one of them. "Give this a try."

"It was instant," Regal says. "It sang. It was like a romantic encounter. I knew this was right. I know she knew." He resisted. "I'm a little concerned," he told Feidner. "It makes me sound better than I am."

"What's wrong with that?" she asked.

Regal returned to Steinway "desperate," he says, to find something smaller and cheaper. On one visit, he met a sixteen-year-old prodigy, who was playing the same Brahms rhapsody on what Regal now thought of as his piano. The two talked, and the sixteen-year-old asked Regal why he had abandoned his study of the instrument. "You'll understand someday" was all Regal said. Then Regal started worrying that the prodigy



"Geez, Bob, this is stupid. What have you got, hair for brains?"

was admiring his piano too much. "I started to fear that someone else would get it."

On his next visit, as Feidner led him to the room, they heard someone playing, someone with a virtuoso sound and technique. When they entered, a man was playing Regal's piano. It sounded fantastic. But Feidner interrupted him.

"This is his piano," she said, referring to Regal. "I'll have to ask you to play another one."

After he had left, Feidner turned to Regal. "Do you know who that is?" Regal didn't. It was Barry Douglas, a concert pianist whose acclaimed recording of Moussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition" Regal had played for his wife on their second date. Later, Feidner introduced them, and Regal told Douglas how much the recording had meant to him. By then, he says, "I was sold. It was fate."

It's not unusual to run into a famous concert artist at Steinway Hall; last year, ninety-seven per cent of piano soloists with the world's major orchestras chose Steinways for their performances. A remarkable roster of pianists, from Martha Argerich to Krystian Zimerman, are "Steinway Artists," which means that they both own a Steinway and use Steinway pianos exclusively in their con-

cert appearances. Steinway offers no financial incentives to these performers, but, as Mazurco, the head of sales, told me, the company recognizes that their patronage is "critical" to the Steinway reputation. "The only way to maintain this is to provide the best pianos," he said. Still, Steinway caters to their preferences by maintaining a fleet of about three hundred concert grands—an inventory worth twenty-one million dollars—which is at their disposal for concert appearances around the world and is unrivalled by any other manufacturer. (Performers or their hosts pay rental and transportation fees.)

In 1988, André Watts caused a stir when he dropped Steinway for Yamaha, complaining about maintenance standards on the concert grands. Steinway responded by tightening standards for its maintenance personnel and reducing the number of authorized Steinway dealers from a hundred and fifty-three to seventy-four. Watts returned to playing Steinways in 1993.

Of course, most of Feidner's customers are not concert artists, and few have trained at Juilliard. Many do not play the piano at all. They may hope to learn, or perhaps they hope their children will. Many are drawn to Steinway by the allure of the brand name, and the pianos'

reputation for quality and as a good investment.

Buyers should not come to Steinway expecting a bargain. Other pianos sell for half or less than half of Steinways; the Steinway list price ranges from fifteen thousand dollars for the smallest upright to eighty-six thousand for the basic concert grand. "No one compares a Steinway to a piano that's half the price," Mazurco says. "If you can afford it, you gravitate toward a Steinway, either new or pre-owned. That's the competition."

Earlier this year, Feidner agreed to let me observe her with a customer. This was Cathy Weisenburger, who lives with her husband and her two children in Greenwich, Connecticut. She and Feidner had never met, but they had spoken on the phone. After studying the Steinway brochures, Weisenburger told Feidner that she thought she had room in her home for the six-eleven Model B. She had added that she didn't play, but that she and her children were planning to take lessons. "I

can help you find a teacher," Feidner had said. They made an appointment to meet at the showroom.

Not being a musician, Weisenburger seemed more concerned about how the piano would look in the living room of her house, where she also wanted to install a harp, to create a "music-room effect." She wondered what kind of wood she should choose. "What do most people get?" she asked. "I want it to fit in." Feidner asked her to describe her interior decorating—"traditional, tufted, fluffy"—and established that the room's floors were cherry, a warm, reddish-toned wood. She explained that although Steinway still sells more ebony pianos than any other kind, natural wood veneers have been growing in popularity, and Steinway has introduced a collection of pianos featuring exotic woods. Black can be "cold" in the traditional environment that Weisenburger described, Feidner said. "Mahogany, perhaps, or rosewood." Feidner later told me that many customers focus on the

look of a piano. It is, after all, a sizable and permanent fixture in a home, and she often has to function as something of an interior decorator.

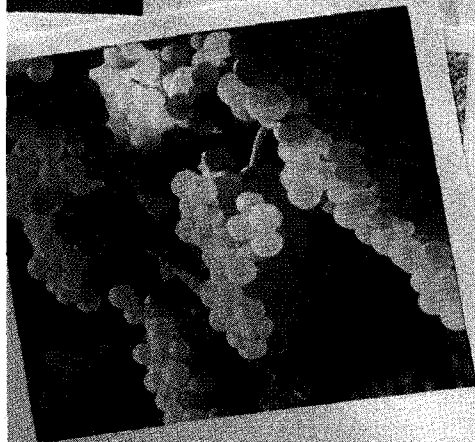
Walking toward the rooms of pianos, Feidner said, "We have sixteen new Bs just now, but there are two I absolutely love." She led Weisenburger to the pianos and played a few chords on each.

"I can't tell the difference," Weisenburger responded. Feidner reached in and plucked a string. "Listen carefully," she said. "Every piano has a personality. They're born that way. It's DNA. This piano has a beautiful sustain. The action is very fluid." Feidner played a brief excerpt from a Chopin polonaise. By now, Weisenburger was listening intently. "Try this," Feidner said. She had Weisenburger improvise a melody using only the black keys—a pentatonic scale, which sounds coherent in any combination of notes. Weisenburger's brief effort sounded surprisingly good. "The better the piano, the more the potential," Feidner remarked. Then she led Weisenburger across the

Thursday

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room to another piano and plucked a string. She played a few chords, and had Weisenburger play again. The sound seemed dull, lifeless. "I can hear the difference," Weisenburger said.

Weisenburger noticed another model B in the same room, as did I. It was the most beautiful piano I'd ever seen. Feidner pointed out that it was veneered in East Indian rosewood—part of Steinway's Crown Jewel Collection. But it had already been sold, by Feidner. She summarily dismissed another attractive model in mahogany. "Don't waste your time—it honks." En route to see some restored pianos, Feidner led us through a room with a piano that caught Weisenburger's attention immediately. "What's this?" she asked.

This was another stunningly beautiful piano. Feidner explained that it was a limited Tiffany edition with hand-carving in African Pommelle mahogany. The Model L we saw, one of two hundred Tiffany pianos made, was already sold, and was undergoing a final polish

before delivery. But Feidner mentioned that there was one remaining Tiffany B in the factory in Queens, which she had played and could recommend. She would arrange to have it brought to Manhattan so that Weisenburger could hear and play it. The price was a hundred and fourteen thousand dollars.

Though not a musician—at least, not yet—it was obvious that Weisenburger was smitten by the unseen piano. Within an hour, she had left a thousand-dollar deposit reserving the Tiffany B.

Several days later, Feidner reported that Weisenburger's husband had balked at the Tiffany Model B. I thought it was too bad that Feidner couldn't get him into the showroom with his wife, because I suspected that in Feidner's presence his inhibitions would quickly evaporate. But Feidner seemed unfazed. She subsequently located a slightly used five-foot-eleven-inch Model L, also a Tiffany edition, in a beautiful East Indian rosewood. Its price was eighty-two thousand dollars. After playing it herself and liking it,

Feidner had Weisenburger return, to see and hear the piano. Weisenburger loved it, and took delivery in March.

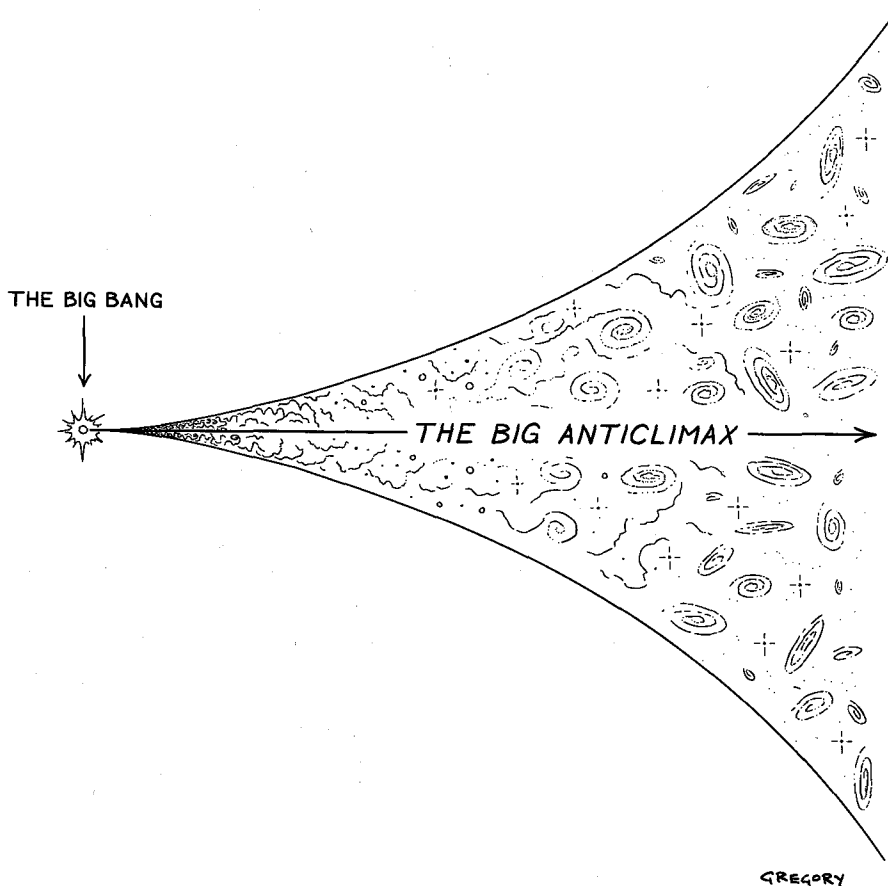
In part because Feidner refuses to sell what she considers an inadequate piano, her "closing ratio"—the percentage of her walk-in customers who actually buy a piano—has not always been the highest at Steinway. She will often ask a customer to wait until the right piano materializes, and this can take months or, in rare cases, years. Her sales success stems from the large volume of customers who ask specifically for her, usually referred by a former customer or by a piano teacher. (Feidner has had dealings with more than eight hundred piano teachers in the metropolitan area.) In many cases, they suggest Feidner because their own experience with her was so positive or memorable, and because her involvement with her clients doesn't end with the sale of a piano. This, too, is something I have experienced.

After my piano was delivered and I began the monthly payments, a steady

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stream of correspondence arrived from Feidner. There were sales events, reminders to insure my piano, updates on price increases—all to be expected—but also invitations to recitals at Steinway Hall, hosted by Feidner. Among its other attributes, the acoustics of the impressive domed room provide an ideal setting for the Steinway sound, and the salespeople can reserve the space for evening recitals, both for individuals and for teachers who wish to showcase their students.

It is true, as Joe Regal had suggested, that a great piano can make a pianist sound better than he or she may actually be, but it can do only so much. I played my new piano for several years, and I had to confront the fact that I was not getting any better. Even by my own forgiving standards, nothing I played was suitable for performance, even before a group of close friends. Feidner's suggestion that I resume lessons nagged at me, although thirty years had passed since my last one, just before I graduated from high school. I had been an undisciplined and, for my teacher, an exasperating student. I seemed to have an aptitude, and I could sight-

read easily, which was more a curse than a blessing, because I could coast through lessons without practicing. Though I had never aspired to a concert career, I sometimes wondered what I could accomplish if I had some direction and actually practiced. But in all those years since my last lesson Feidner was the first person with any musical training to encourage me. So, finally, two years ago, I called and took her up on her offer to help me find a teacher. She seemed delighted to supply me with the names of three teachers who accepted adult students, and who she felt would be suitable for someone at my level, which is how I ended up taking lessons from Bari Mort, a pianist on the Upper West Side who also teaches at Bard College. It was a good match.

In a matter of months, Feidner called to tell me she was working out the next year's schedule for the Steinway recital series and wanted me to perform. I was, of course, immensely flattered, and naïve about how much work it would take, so I committed myself to a date. I chose several works I loved but couldn't play, and began practicing and preparing with

Bari. I had weekly lessons, and I practiced an hour each morning. No longer an adolescent, I cultivated patience and humility. Feidner called periodically to discuss my repertoire, check on my progress, and offer encouragement. During several weeks that I was travelling to promote a book I had written, Feidner contacted Steinway representatives, who made pianos available to me in every city I visited. In Chicago, I was introduced to a visiting pianist who was practicing for an upcoming performance with the Chicago Symphony as a fellow "Steinway Artist."

Finally, the date arrived. I was uncharacteristically nervous, never having experienced anything like a solo recital, and worried that the results of my hard work could easily be a catastrophe. I especially regretted having chosen to open with a treacherous Bach prelude and fugue. But, once I arrived at Steinway, a certain calm descended as I realized that, whatever happened, it would soon be over. Exuding confidence, Feidner led me to a practice room to warm up. The audience was made up mostly of relatives and friends, and I was encouraged by the applause that greeted my arrival at the concert grand. I got through the Bach, wandering, inexplicably, from the score only once. When I returned for the centerpiece of my performance, a Schubert Sonata in A Major, my nervousness had dissipated and I began to enjoy myself, becoming absorbed in the music and all but forgetting the audience. My adrenaline flowing, I finished with a Liszt valse and a Brahms intermezzo. The applause seemed thunderous, but I couldn't deliver an encore, since I had exhausted my repertoire. Still, the experience was exhilarating, and I rank it among the high points of my life.

In the early nineteen-nineties, Rein van der Linde learned that he was suffering from leukemia, and his health began to deteriorate. When Erica's first child, Luke, was born, in June of 1996, she called and asked if he and her mother would come to the city to see their grandson. He declined, saying they might come later in the summer, after their annual vacation in Canada. In tears, Erica called Amy. "Don't they realize how important this is to me?" she pleaded. Eventually, her father relented, and he and her mother came for a visit. But Erica deemed it a complete failure. The weather

was oppressively hot, her father seemed to resent being there, Luke cried, and, as a new mother, Erica was too exhausted to do much to boost her father's spirits.

A few weeks later, her brother called, and then her mother got on the phone. While they were in New Brunswick, her father had experienced a crippling headache, and had been taken by ferry to a hospital in Calais, Maine. His leukemia was in an advanced stage. Erica started crying. She hadn't called him on his birthday, the day before, and now she felt terrible, and worried that it was too late. Taking time off from Steinway, and leaving Luke with Eric, she flew to Calais. Her father was conscious, but he couldn't speak or eat. He had asked that his life not be prolonged artificially, and he was not receiving any nutrients. Alone with her father, Erica told him, "I know we've grown apart. I don't know why, but I'm sorry."

Erica spent the night in the hospital with her sisters. The next day, she returned to New York; there was nothing to do in Maine but wait.

Two days later, with no new developments at the hospital, Erica and Eric prepared a dinner celebrating her father. They made Martinis, Rein's favorite cocktail, and listened to a recording of Dinu Lipatti, his favorite pianist.

But later that night Erica felt restless. "I want to go out," she told Eric. "I want to be alone."

After she left the apartment, she found herself walking toward Steinway. When she arrived, the building was locked. She let herself in. The large hall was eerily silent. The chandelier illuminated a concert grand, Serial No. 531248. It happened to be Erica's favorite piano then in the showroom, and she didn't know that it had been placed on display in the center of the room. She went to the nearest desk and called her father's hospital room. Amy answered, and Erica asked her to put the receiver to her father's ear.

Then Erica walked to the piano, and sat at the keyboard. She began playing from memory, first the Chopin Ballade No. 4 in F Minor. Then two Bach preludes. Then the Chopin C-Sharp-Minor Nocturne, Opus Posthumous. The music came pouring out, flawlessly, effortlessly. Erica felt that she had never played better, or with such feeling. As the last notes of the nocturne faded, something told her to stop. Emotionally drained, she sat

for a moment in silence, and then told her father that she loved him. The next morning, Rein died.

After her father's death, Erica began playing again—the Chopin polonaises, the mazurkas, the F-Minor Fantasy—though she didn't lose her inhibitions overnight. "I'm still struggling," she said recently. "But I've had bursts of playing." She is continuing to practice, and plans to take up Prokofiev's Sonata No. 1 and the Schubert Sonata in B-Flat Major, written just before the composer's death. Her sisters have also returned to music and the piano. Polly is running the piano camp with their mother in Bennington, and Tasha teaches there, too. Amy is teaching piano in Manhattan; several of her students have been referred by Erica.

Two years ago, Erica was testing a new ebonized Model B at Steinway, and discovered a piano she felt that she, too, couldn't live without. "I could tell it what to do," she said. "I knew that within two seconds. The sound is assertive, bold, fiery." But, for someone so adept at matching people and pianos, she agonized over her own choice. "When it comes to yourself, it's different," she told me. "I couldn't quite hear." She consulted two Steinway technicians, who reinforced her initial impression: it was an exceptional piano. She bought it, using Steinway's employee discount, and she and Eric found room for it in a new, larger house in suburban Mount Kisco. Erica gave birth to a daughter last summer, and Luke, now five, has been improvising on the piano.

This March, Erica performed in public for the first time in fourteen years, at an event for students and their parents at the Performing Arts Center in Westhampton Beach, New York. The audience was wildly enthusiastic, even though she had two minor memory slips in a Chopin polonaise. Once, she would have agonized over this, but now it didn't matter, she told me shortly after the performance. "I don't have to be a professional. I can relax."

Steinway concert grand No. 531248 was sold soon after Erica experienced her reawakening at its keyboard. She hated to see it go. But before it left the showroom she had a technician remove one of its bronze pedals and replace it with another. The original now rests in a drawer in her bedroom. ♦



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CONSTANT SORROW

The long road of Ralph Stanley.

BY DAVID GATES

Looked at from the world's point of view, it was a triumphant day for Ralph Stanley. Looked at from his own, it was a long wait to sing three songs. He hadn't slept well—"I must've turned over a hundred times"—partly because his two-year-old grandson was in the hospital back home, in Virginia, with pneumonia, and partly because no normal person could sleep in New York. His description of the hotel where he and his wife, Jimmi, were staying made it sound like an S.R.O. in Hell's Kitchen. (In fact, it was the aggressively fashionable Hudson, on West Fifty-eighth Street.) And Carnegie Hall's Dressing Room D, where he'd been hanging out behind a closed door since one-thirty in the afternoon for an evening performance, had just about everything a man didn't need: an upright piano, plates of fruit and cold cuts, and air-conditioning that wouldn't go off.

Stanley had come here during a hot spell in June as the culminating attraction of a sold-out concert featuring music on the best-selling soundtrack album from the film "O Brother, Where Art Thou?," for which he had joined such roots-music loyalists as the late John Hartford, Emmylou Harris, Gillian Welch and David Rawlings, the Cox Family, and three sweet-and-sour-voiced little girls from Tennessee called the Peasall Sisters. Since May of last year, when these people were last onstage together, at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium, they had had occasion to reflect on the truisms about mortality and mutability in the songs they sing. Just a few days before the Carnegie Hall concert, Hartford had died of cancer. Several months earlier, the fiddler Willard Cox had broken his back in a car wreck; tonight he was playing in a wheelchair.

As the concert began, Stanley changed into his stage clothes, remarking—not without a certain sly satisfaction—that they made him look like "an undertaker": black suit with a blacker stripe; black shirt; busy tie in muted red; and a tiepin

with a tiny clockface. His physical presence is not commanding. He's a short, owl-like-looking man with wire-rimmed glasses and tightly curled, meticulously styled gray hair; when he's not playing the banjo, he often does his hell-harrowing singing with his hands in his pockets. And since he had come here only to sing and not perform with his



Stanley put more drive into the bluegrass banjo style—"overdrive," one disciple says.

own band, he had left his custom-made Stanleytone five-string and his trademark white Stetson at home. He stood in the wings with Jimmi, listening to the others, until it was time for him to go on and close the show. A few performers respectfully approached him, but he gladdened no one. At last, he squared his shoulders and strode onto the stage to a standing ovation.

Backed by a few of the evening's other performers, he sang three of his strongest, most death-haunted songs. (Probably half of the two thousand or so numbers that he has recorded involve lonesome graves, cold dark shrouds, murders, dying parents—also dying children, siblings, sweethearts, and Saviours—and the prospective glories of Heaven.) His first song, "Oh Death," was an unaccompanied solo on the ancient theme of bargaining with the Reaper to "spare me over till another year." Next came "Man of Constant Sorrow." With its insistent, chugging rhythm, as much blues as bluegrass, and its weird, angular melody, it has been his signature number for more than fifty years. He closed the program with "Angel Band," a song that he first re-

corded in 1955 with his late brother, Carter. "My latest sun is sinking fast," it begins. "My race is nearly run." The performance was Ralph Stanley at his present-day best: his well-aged tenor voice strong and hard, its edge unblunted, as he navigated the turns and ornaments that he learned as a boy, singing in a Primitive Baptist church. He had performed these songs thousands of times over half

CHARLES BURNS

a century, but, as usual, he changed a few nuances. In "Angel Band," when he got to "whose blood now cleanses from all sin / And gives me victory," his voice leaped up a clarion-call fifth on the word "me."

Ever since the death of Bill Monroe, the putative father of bluegrass, in 1996, Ralph Stanley has been the supreme icon of authenticity in American vernacular music. He is neither the last nor the oldest of the mountain-music patriarchs: Earl Scruggs, who is the prototypical bluegrass banjo player, and served as an early model for Stanley, has just released his first album since 1984, "Earl Scruggs and Friends." But Scruggs hasn't performed much in the past quarter century; Stanley, who is slightly younger, continues to do more than a hundred shows a year. Even when he was in his twenties, Stanley's voice—hard, piercing, with a touch of raspiness—made him sound like a scary old man. Today, he sounds even scarier, and he has begun appealing to an audience far beyond the usual bluegrass circuit of summer festivals, college-town coffeeshouses, and school and firehouse gigs throughout the rural South.

Stanley has striven for commercial success ever since 1946, when he and Carter started out as the Stanley Brothers. But since he's ultimately selling his own rugged unworldliness, he also needs to keep the culture of getting and spending at a distance. After his brother died, in 1966, he deliberately turned backward and inward. He cultivated his own conservative musical instincts—soon, for instance, he began featuring stark a cappella gospel quartets—and, over the years, he has kept as close as a touring musician can to the primal landscape of his childhood: Virginia's Clinch Mountain region. For years, he has listened to few recordings but his own—if he's in the mood for Nashville-type country, he chooses George Jones—and his duets with such admirers as Bob Dylan and Lucinda Williams suggest that these better-known musicians want to touch the source of an almost mystical purity. Unlike Monroe, who occasionally hired urban college types, Stanley won't take on a musician who's not from the Southern mountains. "With all due respect," he told me, "I don't think Northern city boys have got the natural . . . you know. I like to have a man in

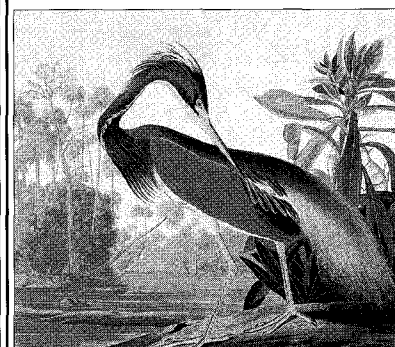
my band that talks like me. I just like to keep it down simple."

Stanley often begins the ritual opening speech at his shows with "a big old howdy" and a promise to deliver "that old-time, mountain-style, what-they-call-bluegrass music." This bumpy formulation is an attempt to draw a fine distinction: the most revered performer in bluegrass isn't sure that the term fits him. The name originated with Monroe, a Kentuckian who boosterishly called his band the Blue Grass Boys. Ralph Stanley's music sounds, superficially, like Monroe's, but to a musician of Stanley's generation "bluegrass" still feels like a brand name. He generally refers to what he plays as "my kind of music," or, if you press him, "just that old-time mountain music."

In fact, mountain music was never that simple. By the time fiddlers, banjo players, and singers from the Southern Appalachians began to be recorded, in the nineteen-twenties, they had already synthesized influences as diverse as ballads and dance tunes from the British Isles; blue notes, the banjo, and rocking polyrhythms from Africa; ragtime tunes and Victorian parlor songs. Twentieth-century technology, which allowed the music to travel independently of the musicians, only encouraged such exchanges. Stanley, who was born in 1927, remembers when his parents got their first radio—a battery-powered model, as they had no electricity—and when he first heard the Grand Ole Opry broadcasts from Nashville. Well before the advent of bluegrass, mountain music had already become a media-disseminated entertainment.

The band that Monroe formed in 1945 inspired a revolution. For all of bluegrass's traditional roots, it is a recent—even modernist—form, only a few years younger than bebop. Unlike ensemble-oriented old-time mountain bands, Monroe's group allowed individual musicians to play jazz-like, semi-improvised solos, and ornate obbligatos behind the singing. To complement his own hopped-up, asymmetrical mandolin and his bluesy, androgynous tenor voice, Monroe picked a team of virtuosos—notably Scruggs, who had perfected an intricate system of three-finger picking that produced a dense, high-speed flow of notes, like a twanging

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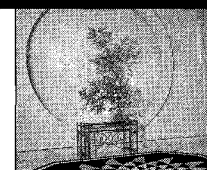
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tommy gun. From that day to this, almost every bluegrass band has been a variation of Monroe's: Scruggs-style banjo, fiddle, mandolin, rhythm guitar, and bass, with sometimes a lead guitar or a dobro, and a repertoire of retooled folk, gospel, and love-gone-wrong songs.

Bluegrass might be described as meta-mountain music—self-referential and driven by an anxiety that the old ways of life, and the music that went with them, are vanishing. Monroe's “Uncle Pen” is the best-known example of a favorite bluegrass trope: an up-tempo fiddle showpiece about an old fiddler and the tunes he used to play. Song after song tells the same story of uprootedness and alienation; the genre's locus classicus is the Stanley Brothers' version of “Rank Strangers.” “I wandered again to my home in the mountains / Where in youth's early dawn I was happy and free / I looked for my friends, but I never could find them / I found they were all rank strangers to me.” “Rank Strangers” reflects the hard times that drove people away from the mountains of Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee after the Second World War. These new urban workers made up an appreciable part of the bluegrass audience; for them, Stanley's “Man of Constant Sorrow” (“I bid farewell to old Kentucky, the state where I was born and raised”) was both a nostalgic reminder of home and a bitter anthem of loss. “I've saw it when we'd play the bars and things up in Ohio—Dayton and Columbus and Cincinnati and through there,” George Shuffler, who was the Stanley Brothers' lead guitarist, told me. “That was where all the people migrated to get out of the coal mines. I've saw 'em raise the roof when Ralph would start into that thing.”

Stanley has known that feeling of exile. In 1951, he and Carter briefly took jobs at the Ford plant in Detroit. “That was a pretty miserable ten weeks for me,” he said, fifty years later. “I was a truckpan welder, spot welder. I was working night shift, about three until twelve or something. I got homesick. I thought they's something better to do than punch a clock. So I quit and went home.”

Stanley still lives in a remote area of southwestern Virginia, between the towns of Coeburn and McClure, just a few miles from where he grew up. The

country looks much the same as it did when he was a boy, except for some flattened hilltops that the coal companies once strip-mined, where cattle now graze. You're getting close when you hit a crossroads with a Kwik Stop, a Freewill Baptist church, and a sign that reads “Jesus Is the Answerer and Finisher of Our Faith.”

Stanley's house is a large, elegant, one-story gray stone rambler on a gentle rise; a section of his thirty-five-acre property near the road is marked off with a gentleman farmer's white fences. Stanley's son and lead singer, Ralph II—his father and his bandmates call him Two—lives in a small white trailer next door with his wife, Kristi. When I pulled into the driveway one morning, I was greeted by Two's German shepherd, Harley. Stanley, dressed for company in slacks and a sports shirt, ignored Harley's tail-wagging. “I'm kinda mad at him,” he said. “He goes after the horses. So I don't fool with him much.” He showed off his palomino, Angel, who was about to foal, and his John Deere Gator, a six-wheel all-terrain vehicle that he'd wanted for several years, but which now sat unused in a shed. “I bet it hasn't got more than fifteen miles on it,” he said. (A few months later, he sold the thing.) Stanley clearly loved this place, but he also seemed at a distance from it—perhaps the consequence of spending most of his life on a tour bus, heading from one town to the next to sing about his home in the mountains.

In the kitchen, something smelled good: Stanley, who likes to cook, had some beans on the stove. He led me into the reddest living room I've ever seen: an acre of red carpet, a plush red sofa, red curtains pulled open to reveal a manicured lawn. The floor-to-ceiling picture window and the meticulous housekeeping made the room seem like a diorama; ceramic dogs here and there, a white ceramic pillar with a cupid holding a cornucopia of roses, a display case with china angels, china birds, and a china Jesus. The only thing that looked out of place was the banjo case on the floor. Jimmi Stanley came in to say hello, chatted about the weather and her allergies, and offered us coffee. Stanley has small hands, and it was hard not to stare at his fingers: they curl away from the thumb,

ORPHANAGE

Now you've joined the mist spectres we once
 peered into the night waves
to make out—the sparks from driftwood fire
 whooshing up the black sky,
smoke rings, mown grass, Shalimar, a handful
 of earth, turpentine, breath—they are
your substance now in the glorious
 every fragrance, afterglow, aura,
and your face permanent marble as the final
 snapshot willed it.
And just as a child will cling to the creamiest
 silk slip helpless while it glides
from the grasp, so I felt your soul shed
 your hand, a lost glove
whose nonexistent heft I in memory keep
 holding though now you are
beyond us. No headlights will announce
 your arrival—high heels
wagging on gravel when you aimed that finger
 at the moon, saying, *I have*
an earring like that. And forever to greet you,
 I must shut my eyes.

—Mary Karr

which made me wonder how he still managed to play banjo as strongly as he does. As we talked he drummed his fingers on a glass-topped table.

In conversation, Stanley has his set pieces: The road-not-taken story about his once having to choose between spending five dollars on either a brood sow or his first banjo; the there-but-for-the-grace-of-God story of a drunk who shot and killed one of his lead singers, Roy Lee Centers, who sounded uncannily like Carter. "Roy went to a party, and of course they all got drunk," Stanley said. "Roy's little boy was with him. He was about eight or nine years old at that time, maybe ten. And the tale the little boy told, this fella drove Roy home and he changed routes a little bit. Roy said, 'Where you going?' The fella said, 'I'm gonna take you up this road here and kill you.' He took him up there, got him out, and said, 'I'm gonna silence that beautiful voice forever,' and shot him right in the mouth. Then he turned around and took the butt of the gun and beat him all to pieces."

Stanley walked me briskly through his childhood: the period when he

worked in his father's sawmill; his early thoughts of being a veterinarian; his father's leaving the family when Ralph was thirteen. From that time on, he said, "we didn't see too much of him." Stanley began taking music seriously as a teen-ager, singing brother-act harmonies with Carter, who played guitar; they sometimes performed for donations outside the Clinchfield Coal Company on paydays. He did a short stretch in the Army, just after the war ended. Then he and Carter formed a band with a mandolinist, Pee Wee Lambert, and a fiddler, Leslie Keith. Before long, they'd landed the midday spot on "Farm and Fun Time" on WCYB, in Bristol, on the Virginia-Tennessee border, fifty miles from home. Even then, the shy and taciturn Ralph let his older, taller, more outgoing brother do most of the talking and lead singing. "Carter would've just as soon called the President as he would've called me," Stanley said. "He was a good mixer, a lot more forward than I am. Easier to get acquainted with."

At first, Stanley played banjo in the archaic clawhammer style that his

mother had taught him: a clip-clopping sound produced by a downstroke of the index fingernail, followed by the thumb playing accents on the fifth string. He had also mastered the smoother two-finger style, in which the index finger picks upward. But, in the forties, a few banjo players—mainly in North Carolina—were refining a more complex three-finger style, attacking the strings in repeating sequences called "rolls"; on fast tunes, an overpowering technician like Earl Scruggs could unleash as many as fifteen notes per second. "I believe the first person I heard do that was a man by the name of Hoke Jenkins," Stanley said. "He was playing it on the radio somewhere. And I thought I needed to be doing it that way. There was just more of a drive to it. Then I heard Earl Scruggs with Bill Monroe on the Grand Ole Opry. I could tell they was using three fingers. But I never could copy anybody. When I found out there was a sort of a roll, I wanted to just play it the way I felt it, and I didn't want to hear them anymore. I guess I still don't have it right. Earl Scruggs probably knows a little bit more about music. I'd say he's more polished, you know." When I asked Steve Sparkman, a Stanley disciple who now plays the more difficult banjo parts with the Clinch Mountain Boys, to characterize the difference between the two masters, he said, "Ralph took the drive and put more drive in. You might say overdrive. Just *wham!* Keep that forward roll jammin'."

Stanley's other contribution to the band's sound, his raw, yearning tenor voice, was even more distinctive. He sang lead mostly on the old-time songs—"Little Maggie," "Pretty Polly," "Man of Constant Sorrow." On the others, he sang high harmony to Carter's lower, smoother-textured melody. Perhaps the most dramatic moment in all the Stanley Brothers' hundreds of recordings occurs in the chorus of "Rank Strangers." After Carter sings the verse, Ralph enters with the words "Everybody I met / Seemed to be a rank stranger" in a voice that stabs like an icepick. He raised the tension in the Stanley Brothers' music to the nearly unbearable: singing above Carter's melody, he would hang on a dissonant note in anticipation of the chord that was about to arrive. Over time, these harmonies be-

came wilder, more edgy and attention-getting—a separate drama that didn't cozy up to the melody but defied it before an ultimate reconciliation. "Every lead singer that sings with me will say I'm hard to sing with," Stanley said. "I hardly ever sing the same verse exactly the same way."

Initially, the Stanley Brothers so admired Monroe that they annoyed him by copying his sound. Their maniacally up-tempo 1948 recording of "Molly and Tenbrooks" was an almost note-for-note version of what Monroe was playing on his radio broadcasts, and when Columbia signed the Stanleys, later that year, Monroe left the label in protest. But the feud, such as it was, was short-lived. In 1951, Carter briefly became a Blue Grass Boy. And at one point both Stanleys did a few gigs with Monroe. "The last night I played with him, Bill said that he would like to have me join him and call it Bill Monroe and the Stanley Brothers," Stanley said. "But I just never did like to work for anybody." In later years, Stanley and Monroe sang together at festivals, where they indulged in the bluegrass world's mode of friendly rivalry: how high could they push the key before somebody's voice cracked? "After the shows," Stanley said, "we personalized.

We'd talk about music, we'd talk about farming. Bill cut his hay with a horse-drawn mowing machine. He was an old-timer."

In contrast to Monroe, who was something of a martinet (he recruited band members to work on his farm when they weren't playing), the Stanley Brothers had a complementary partnership. Carter, who was the principal songwriter, had a gift for the country-style objective correlative—"For years they've been dead / The fields have turned brown"—while Ralph played the fiery instrumentals. Carter did the talking onstage, while the more retiring Ralph did most of the booking and the business. Musically, Carter was the progressive and Ralph the traditionalist. "Carter believed in searching a little bit, and I never did," Stanley said. Everyone who knew Carter was struck by his sharp intelligence, and George Shuffler likes to remember him laughing and throwing his head back so far that you could see his gold tooth. John Cohen, a member of the New Lost City Ramblers, saw a different man. "Carter was so deep into himself," Cohen recalled. "I think it was this huge drinking thing that he had. You couldn't get to where he was."

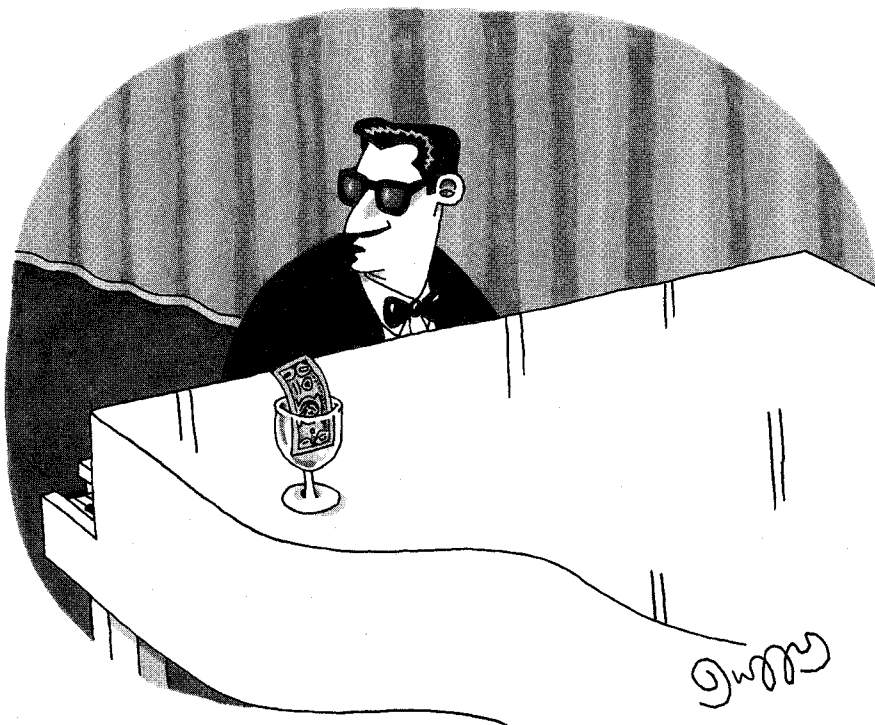
When Carter died of liver disease, at

the age of forty-one, Shuffler was in the hospital waiting room with Ralph. "When the nurse came in and told us," Shuffler recalled, "Ralph was just as limp as a string." Monroe flew to Bristol and was driven up the icy mountain roads to sing at Carter's funeral. (Thirty years later, when Monroe died, Stanley went to Nashville to "sing over Bill," as he put it.) Carter's death made Stanley think, briefly, about quitting music. "He had a hard time in his heart knowing what to do," Ricky Skaggs, who played mandolin for Stanley in the early seventies, told me. "But Ralph had a desire to keep the Stanley Brothers sound alive. And he didn't know any other trade. He didn't have anything else to do."

Stanley said, "I knew that I had one or the other of two ways to go: up or down. I wanted to go up."

Last spring, on a Thursday night in Berkeley, California, I caught up with Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys. They were in the middle of a two-week tour. Freight & Salvage, a large coffeehouse on a side street near the university, has been a regular stop of theirs since the seventies, and both the Thursday and Friday shows were sold out. The band likes the West Coast: the audiences are knowledgeable and enthusiastic, and they tend to have more money than folks in the Deep South; on a tour like this, the band members who have solo CDs and tapes to sell can make fifteen hundred dollars above their usual wages. The audience was a typical folk-music crowd: faculty, grad students, a couple of Sikhs with beards and turbans, a biker in a Merle Haggard cap, an alert-looking young woman with a T-shirt that read "Got Banjo?" Median age: forty. Percentage wearing glasses: fifty. Randy Campbell, an agent who books the band on the West Coast, calls this sort of venue "the Church of Ralph Stanley."

The Clinch Mountain Boys are a seven-member repertory company. The fiddler, James Price, is so magisterially large that he looks as if he were holding a kid-size Suzuki violin. Price doubles as the comedian—Stanley, of course, is the straight man—and he does convincing onstage impressions of Johnny Cash and Willie Nelson (as well as a convincing offstage impression



"This next one goes out to everybody who wishes I were Bobby Short."

of Ralph Stanley). The lead guitarist, James Alan Shelton, has mastered George Shuffler's "cross-picking" technique, a wrist-twisting approximation of the three-finger banjo style; he's also the road manager. Steve Sparkman plays Stanley's old banjo pieces, such as "Hard Times" and "Clinch Mountain Backstep." The mandolinist, John Rigsby, can fill in singing either Carter-like lead or Ralph-like tenor, as the occasion demands.

Jack Cooke, who was once Bill Monroe's lead singer, has been Stanley's bass player for thirty-one years. He's a source of manic energy despite an arthritic hip and the open-heart surgery he had a couple of years ago. On the band's bus, he'll burst into a Little Richard song or deliver dire prophecies about the environment and the Bush Administration. (Like Stanley, he's a lifelong Democrat.)

Ralph Stanley II, who is twenty-two years old, has been the band's lead singer since he was sixteen. Two started riding the Stanley bus as a boy, and when he couldn't come along he'd play his favorite Stanley Brothers album and his favorite Ralph Stanley album each night on his bedside boom box. "I'd listen to every song on both them records," he told me. "They's twenty on one, twelve on the other. And then I'd go to sleep." With his beard and aviator sunglasses, Two looks like a video-ready young Nashville star. Longtime fans used to roll their eyes about him—his voice hadn't finished changing when he first took the job—but he's become a warm, moving singer, who combines the soulfulness of his Uncle Carter with the more anguished mainstream country style of his hero Keith Whitley, who sang lead with Stanley in the seventies.

Onstage that Thursday night in Berkeley, the band locked into the usual sweetly aching harmonies and headlong rhythms: the heavy bass that brings the words "bull fiddle" to mind, the woody acoustic guitars, the bell-toned jackhammering of the twin banjos, the keening and skittering fiddle. But Stanley sounded hoarse, and he looked as if he were having trouble keeping his eyes open. On "Man of Constant Sorrow" he strained to hit the top notes, and later apologized to the crowd: "We left Virginia last Wednesday, and we've been

playing for eight nights straight. I tell you, that works on you." He joked about his age and his problems remembering new songs: "Doc, it seems like I can't remember anything anymore." "How long have you been that way?" "What way?" Then he took out his glasses and a piece of paper, and sang "Daddy's Wildwood Flower," a ghost story in which Mama dies and Daddy, with the help of "God's mighty power," summons her back by playing her favorite song on his guitar.

On Saturday morning, the bus, a standard-issue country-star Silver Eagle with "Dr. Ralph Stanley & His Clinch Mountain Boys" painted on its sides, took to the road again: a show in Palo Alto, an all-night run to Los Angeles, a last gig in Tempe, Arizona. On the way, the band members talked cuisine ("You ever eat that swordfish? I don't like that worth a shit"), football, music, and women. James Price read a motivational book by an ex-N.F.L. player; James Shelton read Seymour Hersh's "Dark Side of Camelot." But mostly the musicians dozed in their seats or looked out the windows. Stanley seldom said a word. "This must get rough on him," I said to Shelton. "It's all he knows," Shelton said.

In Tempe, the bus pulled up to a flat-roofed building in a dicey neighborhood, next to an adult bookstore. Price looked out the window and said, "Regular hole in the wall." Stanley shook his head and said, "It ain't even that." But Nita's Hideaway, as the place was called, turned out to be far better than it looked: an ironic simulacrum of the sort of bar that George Shuffler calls a "skull orchard," with black velvet paintings (J.F.K., a squatting cowboy with a lariat, bullfighters, galleons, a charioteer), a pool table, and comfortable easy chairs in a side room. It was the natural habitat of Stanley's newest admirers—the tattooed, the pierced, the dreadlocked, and the shaven-headed—who have discovered him either through "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" or through certifiably cool music stars (Yoakam, Welch, Dylan) who have certified him as even cooler. Yoakam has gone as far as to call him an "archangel."

Ricky Skaggs had suggested to me that Stanley now transcends bluegrass. "He's become like an old African,"

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Skaggs said, “a world-music person.” Stanley’s best performances involve you so deeply that any sense of a particular genre gets lost, the way the book, the page, and finally the words disappear in a great work of literature. A few other American musicians have had this gift: Armstrong, Ellington, Bill Monroe, Merle Haggard, James Brown, Howlin’ Wolf. Despite bluegrass’s mystique of mountain purity and Afro-Druidic roots—what Monroe called its “ancient tones”—there’s nothing inherently special about it. Good bluegrass—like good blues, good jazz, and good rock and roll—is sweet and sad, wild and sexy. Mediocre bluegrass, which you can hear at any festival from a dozen perfectly competent parking-lot bands, is among the most wearisome music on the planet; the more it tries to stretch its parameters—with arty lyrics or bebop licks—the more evident its limitations become. Ralph Stanley understood that the way to go was to simplify, intensify, countryfy. As Steve Sparkman explained it to me, “Take a little block about that big and put everything in it and keep it there. Ralph’s been the king of that.”

At Nita’s, Stanley played the two best sets I heard him do. Sometimes fatigue or irritation revs him up more than a good night’s rest, and maybe a long day of travelling to a hip hellhole did the trick. He delivered violently intense versions of “Pretty Polly” and “Little Maggie”; his two-banjo breaks with Sparkman had an unaccustomed aggressiveness; and his shamelessly over-the-top harmonies seemed to defy anybody who’d ever dared call him what he calls himself—“an old hillbilly.” As he does now at every show, he sang “Oh Death”—it has become his greatest hit—and the whole bar fell silent. When he got to “I come to take the soul,” he executed a semi-yodelled upward turn on the last word that gave me chills. After two weeks on the road, Stanley’s voice was shot, but he didn’t apologize; he was overdriving it the way a rock-and-roll guitarist overdrives an amplifier into grainy distortion, and he seemed to be revelling in the rawness. The crowd at Nita’s might not have been able to tell you—as the crowd at Freight & Salvage probably could—the name of everyone who had been a Clinch Mountain Boy in 1958, but they understood the truest

secret of Ralph Stanley’s appeal: a bed-rock punkishness, a righteous lack of ease in this world, a refusal to comfort or be comforted.

From the beginning of his career, Stanley, like almost every country performer from Roy Acuff to George Jones, has sung mini-dramas of sin and redemption—“Are You Afraid to Die?,” “My Sinful Past,” “Cry from the Cross,” “When I Wake Up to Sleep No More.” Fifteen years ago, he wrote a song titled “I’ll Answer the Call.” Yet, until last summer, it was only words. “I went to this country church,” Stanley told me, “and I heard this man preach, name’s Ezra Junior Davis. After we left the church house, two ladies were going to be baptized. The Clinch River runs by there, and I thought that river was pretty—pretty shade trees. From then on, I could *see* that river. Well, one Saturday night I couldn’t sleep much—worried, had that on my mind—and I got up about four-thirty and called Brother Junior and told him I wanted to be baptized there in the Clinch River that day.”

Stanley took me to a graveyard near his old home, at the top of Smith Ridge. “There’s Grandpa right here,” he said, “and Grandma on the other side of that tree. My mother. And there’s Carter”—he pointed to a mausoleum. Next to it was an identical mausoleum with two names and dates of birth carved on it—“Me and Jimmi’s resting place someday.” From below came a sound that might have been a woodpecker or an idling chain saw. I asked Stanley about a gravestone with a Harley-Davidson carved on it. A father and son, distant cousins on his mother’s side, he guessed; they’d both died of drug overdoses. “You see that little bitty house over there, painted white on this end?” Stanley said. “That’s the house my mother and I had. The old one burned that used to set there, where I was raised, and I

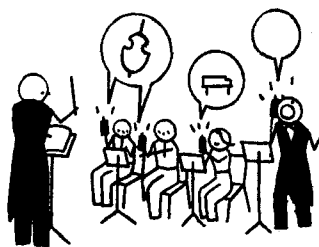
built that little house for her.” He pointed to another house. “Carter built that little yellow one. My first cousin lives there now.” What about those houses, over to the left? “That’s some of their son-in-laws, daughters, and so forth. It’s all family down here.”

The next day, a rainy Sunday morning, Stanley and I got into his Lincoln Town Car and drove over to Grundy. The Hale Creek Primitive Baptist Church, just outside town, was a new, plain white building, across the road from a rocky stream, a picnic pavilion, and a futuristic-looking power transfer station. Nearby stood the original log church, now in disrepair. Inside, rows of padded benches faced a table that had a display of artificial flowers and a box of tissues. Stanley’s “brothers and sisters,” as the members call themselves, were mostly around his age. He greeted them in the group’s ritual embrace—a handshake, then a hug—and chatted about coon hunting, about which relative was in the hospital, about the grandkids.

The service began when one woman, then two, started singing amid the chit-chat. (Primitive Baptists allow no instruments in church, and sing only in unison.) Gradually, everyone joined in, but I could hardly hear Stanley: he’s so used to leading other singers and obeying his own instincts that he finds it hard to follow the turns in the melodies. Several elders felt inspired to stand and preach. One prayed aloud for “the little children on drugs and alcohol”; another pointed to a window and said, with tears on his face, “All these raindrops, and I see them being taken away, one by one. And each one has a meaning.”

Brother Junior, a well-barbered young man with wire-rimmed glasses, began to preach in an unprepossessing mumble, but soon he was singing a King James-like cadence in a scorching tenor that would have shone in any bluegrass band. Men and women wept; some rushed up to shake his hand and hug him. Stanley watched and listened.

After the service ended, the brothers and sisters remained standing to sing one more song: “Happy Birthday.” Today, Brother Ralph turned seventy-four. He had momentarily forgotten all about it. But he smiled like a good sport at all the fuss over him—spared over, as the song says, till another year. ♦



An afternoon sail.

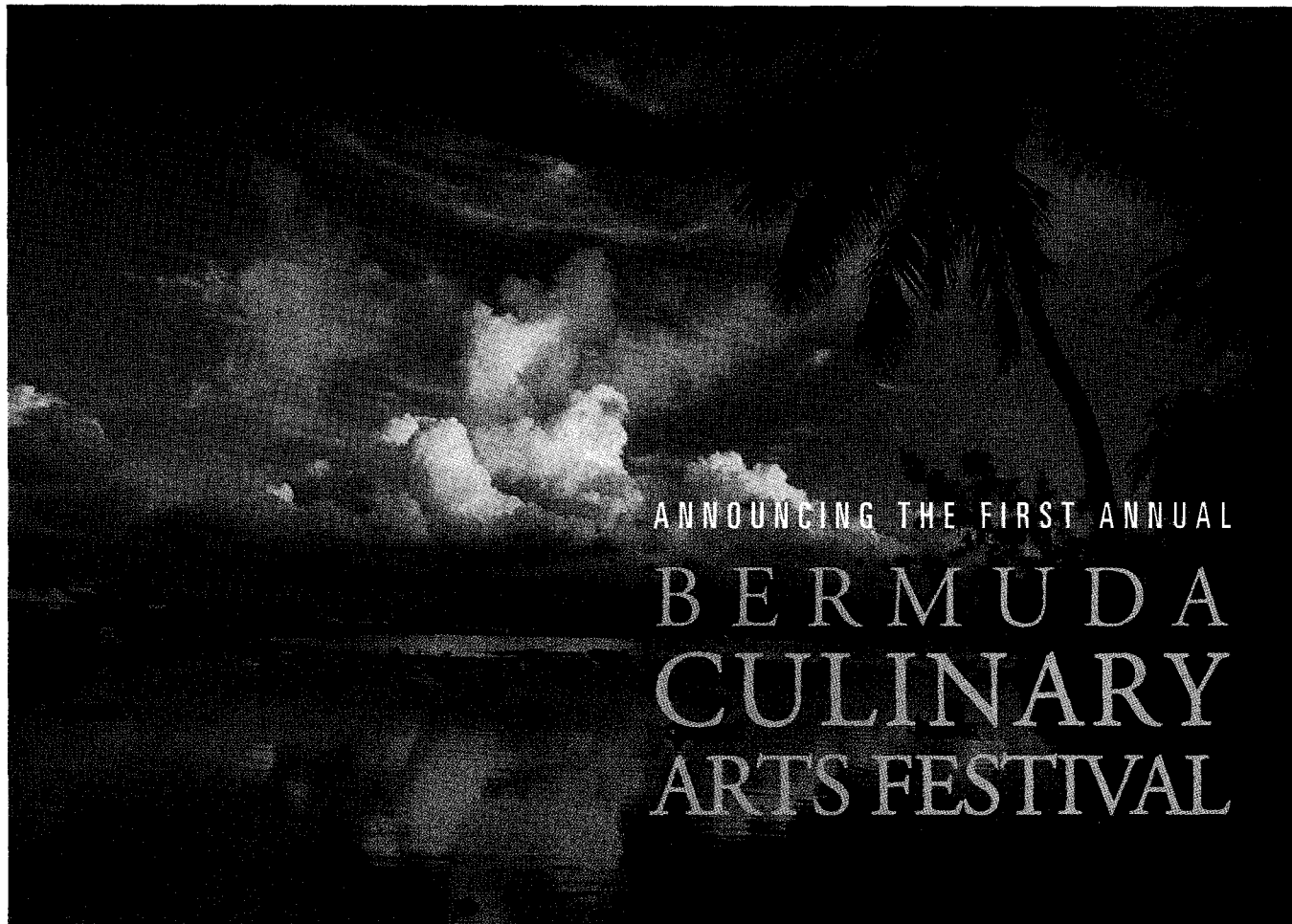
A dinner party at sunset.

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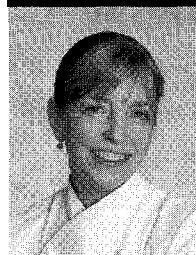
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BERMUDA'S FIRST FOODIE FEST

Diane Forley and Michael Otsuka of New York's Verbena will figure prominently among the star chefs participating in the November culinary event.

cooking in paradise

BY NAO HAUSER

What better company to be in than that of the great chefs who will convene in Bermuda (November 2–5) for the first annual Culinary Arts Festival? They will bring to the beauty of the setting the indulgence of their cooking, and they will make the pleasure of an island sojourn all the more alluring by sharing their passion, insights, and skills.

The chefs are coming from nine highly acclaimed East Coast restaurants, and each is known for working in his or her own unique idiom. Among them, Jody Adams of Rialto, near Boston in Cambridge, focuses on using the best local produce to create a Mediterranean cuisine as memorably vivid as grilled tuna with arugula salad, black olives, and couscous, and as fresh in its inspiration as clam chowder made youthful with roasted tomatoes, favas, and green garlic. Michael Schlow of Radius in Boston presents modern French food that is as classic and mouthwatering as country-style confit of pork and as jazzy as sautéed rouget with two Provençal soul mates, brandade creme and herb salad.

What Andrew Carmellini from New York's Café Boulud (the casual sibling of four-star Daniel) will offer those visiting the Bermudian fest is a creative embrace of ingredients—whether it's granting vichyssoise the new flavors of wild watercress and smoked sturgeon or making lobster crispy, Vietnamese style, to serve with marinated green papaya salad, basil, mint, and cilantro. Newlyweds in the group (and owners of New York's Verbena) Diane Forley and Michael Otsuka, who specialize in using unique market-fresh ingredients, have embarked on an unusual merger of training and tastes. He worked with some of France's best chefs; she wrote a college thesis on the cuisine in the literature of Balzac, Flaubert, and

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BEHIND THE SCENERY

Citronelle's executive chef Michel Richard (left) puts the finishing touches on a meringue confection.



© Philippe Hooze

COD, COCKLES, AND CHORIZO BASQUAISE
Dishing it up with Café Boulud's Andrew Carmellini.

For more information on the first annual Bermuda Culinary Arts Festival including special air and hotel packages, call 800-BERMUDA or visit www.bermudaculinaryarts.com.

Zola. He loves steaks and fish stews; she loves Japanese food.

Together they've simplified Verbená's international cuisine to make it more relaxed. "What's important to us now is to get away from formality," Forley says. "We just want to share with others what we consider to be the most delicious home cooking." Guillermo Pernot of Philadelphia's *Pasión!* (named for his love of cooking, says the Argentine-born chef) plays Western hemisphere matchmaker in his Nuevo Latino cuisine. But he does so subtly and lyrically as in his famous ceviches sparked with tropical fruits and juices. Michel Richard of Citronelle in Washington, DC, has won kudos from *Gourmet* editor Ruth Reichl for joining the Old World with the new in a French-California cuisine of unusual beauty. And having worked as a pastry chef with Gaston Lenôtre in Paris, Richard is also known for French pastries so luscious as to inspire their own longings. To this cosmopolitan mix, it's only fitting to bring Norman Van Aken of Norman's in Coral Gables, Florida, who has invented a magnificent fusion of Caribbean and other tropical ingredients and techniques by, as he asserts, "going after flavor and grabbing it by the shoulders," because that's what really interests him.

Already the chefs have begun to think about tastes and to anticipate the temptations of Bermuda's setting and season. Pernot is hoping to translate the local spiny lobsters into a ceviche fresh from the ocean and to lightly smoke Bermuda's famous wahoo as a prelude to his signature baked oysters and roast pork. Michael Otsuka is thinking of conch and stone crab, while Michael Schlow muses on "light, clean flavors" with an emphasis on fresh vegetables "because that's what the heart and mind crave when it's sunny and warm." And Andrew Carmellini wants to travel with white truffles (November being their season) so that he can treat guests to their luxurious fragrance in gnocchi or small ravioli.

The first night of the festival, Sara Moulton of *Gourmet* magazine will present the roster of superstar chefs along with wine consultant, Michael Green, at a reception at City Hall in Hamilton. As those who watch her Food Network call-in show, "Cooking Live!" know, there's no one better than Moulton for connecting food and people on every level—from professional techniques to family traditions. The Hamilton location fits the mood too, for it is home to The Masterworks Foundation galleries, where works by artists such as Georgia O'Keeffe and Winslow Homer testify to the inspiration of the island.

The chefs will collaborate with their local colleagues to prepare feasts at premier resorts and will be very busy offering demo classes on subjects ranging from traditional Bermudian cuisine to classic French desserts, sushi to grilling, rum to wine. "But it will be fun for us too," Jody Adams emphasizes. "It gives us the opportunity to learn from each other, as colleagues and peers, and to enjoy that unique culture of people who cook, who know that the kitchen is where we have all found a home."

And it is not lost on the chefs, for all their dedication, that they will be cooking in paradise. Perhaps, like the festival guests, they will have time for strolling through Bermuda's historic streets, shopping, snorkeling, tennis, and golf. After all, as Michael Otsuka says with mock seriousness, "It can be very important for a chef to work on eighteen holes with that great slicing tool, the golf club."

(Nao Hauser is a freelance food writer, editor, and consultant in New York, who writes regularly for *Bon Appétit* and contributed to "The Joy of Cooking.")

TRUE STORIES

The shock of PJ Harvey.

BY HILTON ALS

Lights. First slide, please. Here is a photograph of the British singer and songwriter Polly Jean Harvey in performance. The photograph is undated and uncredited, but one can assume from the singer's costume, make-up, and demeanor that the image was taken in or around 1995. That year, Harvey released the album "To Bring You My Love," and invented a new stage persona to go with it—one that acted as a bridge between the public personality she had become and the artist she meant to be. By 1995, Harvey was already the author (there is no other word for it) of two albums: "Dry," released in 1992, when she was twenty-two years old, and "Rid of Me," released a year later. Those albums had been both praised and attacked for their "rawness"—to borrow the pop-music critic's vernacular—and for their seemingly autobiographical immediacy. Feminist-minded critics, male and female, picked at the two albums' twenty-five tracks like carrion birds, and they found, in Harvey's malleable voice and expressive lyrics, more than enough to feed on. Here was a singer, they concluded, who, in her exploration of the female body and its place in the primarily male rock-and-roll world, was as much a victim as she was a triumph.

It was partly in response to such criticism that Harvey began wearing this costume: a tight pink catsuit that accentuates every line and bump; an exposed black bra; turquoise eyeshadow; heavy black mascara on eyelashes as long as beetles' legs; careless red lipstick; a scowl. Here, Harvey is the very image of messy celebrity—or, rather, of celebrity that has made a mess of itself. She's a dandy whose seams are showing, the flip side of David Bowie's immaculate Thin White Duke. Vamp is what Harvey named this persona, who assaults propriety by opening her fleshy mouth to sing irony-laced narratives

about lovesick drifters, forsaken Jesus freaks, prostitutes traversing troubled landscapes, and stalkers and murderers gloating in leather and intransigence. Vamp is the work of an artist who wasn't afraid of becoming—representationally, at least—what she was talking about. Vamp is the work of an artist

who was interested in exploring both the truth of the persona and the truth of the person who created her. Vamp is the work of an artist who was tired of telling people that they had missed the point—her point—entirely.

Afternoon, late spring, in Anaheim, California. A sky as bright and hard as mica. Harvey, white-skinned, dark-haired, dressed in black—a stretchy top, a skirt, ankle boots—sat at a table in her tan tour bus. In the parking lot outside, small groups of youths, blond and rosy-skinned, were starting to gather under palm trees as long and thin as the fingers on God's left hand, waiting for the doors of the Anaheim



"A lot of the work was meant to provoke," Harvey says. "I wanted to be a challenge."

PHILIP BURKE

Pond arena to open. U2 was headlining; PJ Harvey—Harvey and her four-piece touring band—was the “special guest.” Harvey had been on tour since September, 2000, and would be on the road, both with U2 and solo, through September, 2001. Since the tour began, she had also fulfilled a number of obligations to promote her latest record, “Stories from the City, Stories from the Sea,” but in general she gives few interviews, and she rarely drops her reserve during conversation. She has suffered through too many easy or hostile classifications in the press, most of which were foisted on her at the beginning of her career.

“I think, especially in the early days, I didn’t know what was going on,” she says. “I didn’t know how to conduct an interview and keep to myself what I wanted to keep to myself. It all happened so quickly, and I’d lived quite a quiet life until then, growing up in the countryside. So it was like being thrown into this world I knew nothing about.” The music business in the early nineties, when eyeliner, blow-dried hair, and Bowie’s and Bryan Ferry’s various transsexual personae were the norm, promoted Harvey as Camille Paglia’s musical missing link. “I would only wear black, I would scrape my hair back, and I didn’t wear makeup,” Harvey recalls. “I wore big boots, I played a big guitar, and I made a lot of noise. And the English press are extremely into their categorizations. They wanted me to be this kind of dark, melancholic feminist—so they would fit me into that and sidestep all the other parts of the songs that were there. And at that time in England my music was considered quite shocking. I don’t think many women had been playing and singing those kinds of songs, or not for a long time.”

The traditional notion of the female singer-songwriter is based, for the most part, on a dated but durable (and profitable) reality, which began with Carole King, sitting alone at a sunlit piano. By the late seventies, that image had been replaced by Debbie Harry, with her peroxide-blond hair and wet lips, bobbing up and down at CBGB. But the story stayed the same: he’s gone, or he’s so far away, and I may or may not make it on my own, so call me. Harvey broke free of that convention. Her songs are

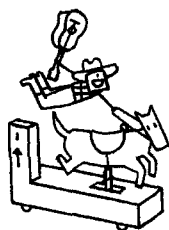
short stories, not confessions, and her own identity has little to do with the different voices she chooses to embody. Whereas Janis Joplin’s blues *were* Janis Joplin’s blues, Harvey isn’t interested in self-revelation. She doesn’t prettify the blues, as Bonnie Raitt sometimes does; nor does she judge it an outdated form that needs jazzing up, as Joni Mitchell did on “Mingus.” Harvey is one of the first white performers since John Lennon and Mick Jagger to think of the blues as a truly living art and to be interested in its gritty source: the tales that blues travellers tell. Unlike Jagger and Lennon, however, she has never attempted to mimic the sound of singers such as Big Mama Thornton and Sippie Wallace, or to run that sound through the wringer of white-male bravado. Instead, like the eclectic artists she most admires—Sly Stone and Captain Beefheart—Harvey revels in a kind of doubleness; she is a musical purist who delights in the impurity of contemporary rock as it borrows from the blues, funk, pop, techno, and trip-hop, and who moves that postmodern sound forward with her ever more complicated voice and lyrics.

Next slide, please. A hamlet near Yeovil, in Dorset, England. There isn’t much to the place (population six hundred): a phone box, a pub, a post office, families that have known one another for generations. “A lot of burial grounds and Iron Age forts” is the way Harvey describes it. She was born here in 1969, the younger of two children. Her father was a quarryman (her brother grew up to be one, too) and her mother was a sculptor who worked part time booking bands in local pubs. She also engraved headstones, and Harvey spent much of her childhood with her mother, among the graves wet with rain and mortality. She was a leader, always organizing games, telling her brother and his friends what roles they could play. (There were very few girls her age

in the village.) She insisted that the boys call her Paul. But her authority was challenged when Paul morphed into Polly during adolescence and she found herself at what she felt was a physical disadvantage. “I’ve always been very hard on myself, partly because of that,” she says. “At school, I was a really hard worker. I kept that competitive drive. I’m very, very competitive.”

Harvey’s parents had a rich and diverse record collection, and she grew up listening to John Lee Hooker, Howlin’ Wolf, Robert Johnson, and Jimi Hendrix. “I was exposed to all these very compassionate musicians at a very young age,” she said in a 1996 *Rolling Stone* interview. “And that’s always remained in me and seems to surface more as I get older and have more experience myself. I think the way we are as we get older is a result of what we knew when we were children.” What Harvey knew—by instinct and example—was the power inherent in performance. “We’d often end up with bands staying with us at weekends,” she says. “Most of them were blues bands or boogie-woogie bands. There would be sax players, and I used to get free lessons. So my mother bought me a sax to play.” In her teens, after school and on weekends, Harvey would go to gigs with friends. “There was nothing else to do,” she says—or nothing else she’d rather do than spend her nights amid blaring amplifiers, greasy pint glasses, and cigarette tips throbbing in the dark. After the saxophone, there was the guitar, the drums, and the first words put down on paper. “I would write stories,” she told me. “And when I was at art college”—Yeovil Art College, where she studied sculpture after finishing high school—“words would be the spark of the idea that would make pieces of work, always words and never anything else.”

When Harvey was nineteen, the music and the words came together. “I suddenly was able to make a thing out of them, something that could be tangible almost—a song instead of just writing on a page. Something that I could stand up and perform. When I first started writing, my few close friends in Dorset—every time I’d see them I’d play them a song,” she said, laughing. “And I only knew three chords. But it was that whole beginning of performing some-



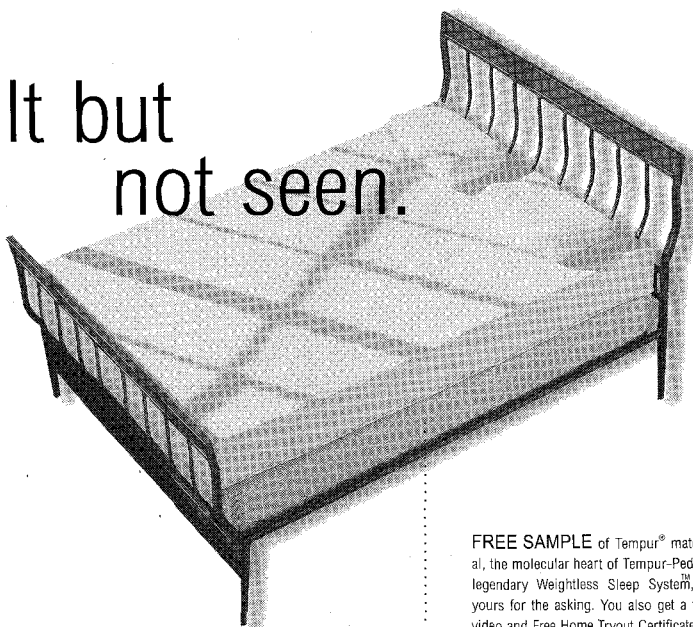
thing to somebody. Of sharing something with someone." Performance was more immediate than the work Harvey had been doing at art school: "Sculpture stood over there, away from my body. It felt antiseptic and distant from me, like it wasn't connected, because it wasn't. Performing made me feel connected to the thing I was doing."

What she was doing was playing guitar and sax in a number of local bands, including an experimental group called Automatic Dlamini, with which she toured Europe. At the age of twenty-one, she formed her own group, PJ Harvey, with Rob Ellis and Stephen Vaughn, both of whom she knew from the Yeovil music scene. Ellis recalls that one of the first gigs they played was a toga party in a skittle alley. "As soon as we struck up, everybody, absolutely everybody, walked out of the building," Ellis says. "There was a barman at one end and we were down at the other end, just looking at each other while playing. And then the next thing I knew there was this woman coming down the alleyway, like a bowling ball, straight at me. She just shouted, as I was playing, 'Don't you realize nobody likes you? Why don't you stop?'"

But some people did like the band—enough to keep it going, anyway. Head, a producer and musician, was one of them. By the time he met Harvey, in the late eighties, Head had become tired of what he calls the "soulless" quality of the recording process, and soon afterward he set up a studio called the Icehouse, in southwestern England, where he planned to record his own work. "But it never happened like that," he says. "I built the studio and kind of got more interested in making records for other people." In 1990, Harvey went to the Icehouse with two bandmates and recorded four songs—three of which ended up on "Dry." "There are some people you meet, and you just know they're the definite article," Head says. "It's there. And it was there. They were a breath of fresh air. Although you can see where she is coming from, it's the way she took that and spoke it with her own voice."

For the first time since childhood, Polly had control over her playmates. Rob Ellis, her longtime drummer and

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co-producer, recalls, "I was a bit older, and she struck me as extremely willful—knew exactly what she wanted, but in a very naïve sort of way, which sometimes became frustrating when we wiser, more experienced musicians thought we knew better." He laughs. "I remember having long sessions in the studio with her, drinking a bottle of Sheep Dip, which is a pretty rough Dorset whiskey, and dreaming up all kinds of stupid ideas. We did 'Oh My Lover' on the roof of the studio with a pair of bongos and guitar, completely drunk—couldn't use it, of course."

The tracks they did use—"Dress," "Happy and Bleeding," and "Plants and Rags"—became Harvey's calling card on the London club scene. "People used to walk in and expect a tiny little girl with a semi-acoustic guitar to sound very quiet and very twee," Head, who engineered most of her gigs in 1991 and 1992, says. "They didn't expect what they got. It was just fantastic. The band would play for forty-five, fifty minutes, and people would come up and say, 'Is that it? They've only been on for twenty minutes.' It was just the fastest fifty minutes of your life. They weren't one of those bands that could do that every now and then. They could do it night after night after night."

After only a handful of shows, Harvey was picked up by the aptly named record label Too Pure.

On "Dry," the album she put out with Too Pure, Harvey married the humor and the hardness of the blues form to what she knew about her own culture that was hard and—to her mind—filled with humor. Her intellectual concerns were expressed in semi-abstract, often controversial lyrics, sung in whoops, shrieks, and whispers over the rough sheen of constantly soaring and collapsing guitar work. "Sheela-Na-Gig," for instance, was inspired by a local fertility symbol who is usually depicted holding her labia open. In the song, the heroine tells a man:

I've been trying to show you over and over
Look at these, my child-bearing hips
Look at these, my ruby red ruby lips
Look at these, my work-strong arms
You've got to see my bottle full of charm
I lay it all at your feet.

He responds, "Sheela-na-gig, Sheela-na-gig, you exhibitionist! / Put money in your idle hole." Instead of employing the kind of self-consciously feminist language that marks albums such as Carly Simon's "Hotcakes," "Dry" and the albums that followed introduced a

writer who thrived on double-entendre, on the satirical and the harshly ecclesiastical. In her lyrics, Harvey shunned convention and proved that she knew exactly why we wear masks in the first place: to survive the depths of our secret selves. She turned her insight and wit onto the plight of the disoriented body in search of faith in a seemingly godless world. In "Fountain," a young woman waits for her personal messiah:

Along comes the wind
A big bone shaker
Blows off my clothes
Completely naked
What to do
When everything's left you?

Out of the blue
It is he
Vision to me
Bearing leaves
Petals green
Covers me and all my shame.

Hand in hand
He's my big man
Stays with me
Some forty days
No words
Then goes away.

"A lot of the work was meant to provoke," Harvey explains. "I was looking for more of a human connection. I wanted to be a challenge." That challenge affected listeners in different ways. Many women, blacks, and gay men recognized in Harvey's songs the voice of their own marginalization, and soon after the release of "Dry" PJ Harvey had developed a steadfast and devoted fan base in both London and New York. But Harvey's ongoing and often aggressive debate on the nature of identity also alienated some listeners, who considered her work abrasive, cold, and cerebral. (Harvey was referred to by critics as a "castrating bitch-queen" and "the lone wolf among the grrrl pack.") In some ways, her songs were reminiscent of the unsentimental, ironic, and narrative-driven photographs of Diane Arbus, with their focus on "freaks"—has-been movie stars, "simple-minded" adults, religious fanatics, and drag queens and kings. Harvey, like Arbus, understood the necessity of making art that was not always agreeable or pretty. In the three and a half minutes or so that she allowed herself in each song, she had a great deal to say—about appearance versus feeling, about intention versus

desire, about ugly truth walking hand in hand with unspeakable beauty. And in that time she worked to create a sort of sonic jolt that would shock the listener into the calm space of reflection. One often flinches at the complex and unyielding work on her early albums, in the way one does at Arbus's most powerful images—"Child with a Toy Hand Grenade in Central Park, N.Y.C., 1962," for instance, a photograph of a young boy who somewhat resembles Harvey in her Vamp incarnation, clutching her microphone like a weapon. Arbus's and Harvey's artistic imperative is never "Like me!" Rather, it is: "Look at me. Look at what I'm showing you. Life looks something like this. The world looks something like me."

Harvey's speaking voice is measured and light, but her singing voice is a variety of voices, adapted to the characters who speak in her songs: a low growl, a falsetto, a child's soprano, a banshee's screech, a bored whisper. "Polly is an extremely nice, very polite, organized person," Rob Ellis told me, fearing, perhaps, that I would confuse the Harvey I saw onstage with the quiet woman sitting in front of me on the tour bus. "It was always very amusing when people met us," he said. "They expected us to be vicious, nasty, loud, garish, shouting people, and we're just meek, polite country boys and girls." He went on, "There was a film called 'Strange Days' that had Juliette Lewis doing a version of one of Polly's songs. And the band was like these huge, hunking, hairy, leather-clad monsters, overly theatrical and hamming it up terribly." He laughed. "So, yes, the contrast between that and how we really are was amusing."

After "Dry" was released, to stellar reviews (*Rolling Stone* anointed Harvey "the best songwriter of 1992"), and hit No. 1 on the British indie charts, there was Polly and then there was everyone else, taking her in, with their eyes and their pens and their cameras. There was Polly, quoted and dissected in *Spin* and *Interview*. There was Polly, nude from the waist up, on the cover of *New Musical Express*. Harvey's willingness to take risks—both as a musician and as a woman—became a powerful marketing tool. She was twenty-two, and she became an image, a

personality, almost before she became a person.

But in London Harvey felt lonely and desperate. She had moved to Tottenham, in the northeastern reaches of the city, where the low skies and council houses on bleak streets matched her imagination. "It's a pretty rough area," she explained a few years later. "It's a very poor, mostly black area, and there were a few scary times down there. Once, I made the mistake of walking home with a friend when we weren't really sure which streets were O.K. to walk on after a certain time." She had one close friend, whom she roomed with, and a boyfriend, whom she broke up with, and then fame came along, knocking the wind out of her so hard that her control broke, and she broke with it. She didn't know how to take a bath or brush her teeth, let alone decide which gigs to book. Harvey now avoids talking about her near-collapse. But before "Rid of Me" was released she moved back to Dorset, where she bought a house of her own, not far from her parents.

For her second album, Harvey signed on with Island Records, a label she chose in part because one of her heroes, Tom Waits, had signed on there, too. "Rid of Me," which was recorded in a Minnesota studio and came out in 1993, was funnier and more expansive than "Dry." The songs were hard and sharp and fast, written in a four-four time that was ruled by the voice and by what one critic called the "cold, harsh, galvanized flatness" of Harvey's guitar. They included beauties like "50-Ft. Queenie":

Hey I'm one big queen
No one can stop me . . .
I'll tell you my name
F U and C K . . .
You bend over
Casanova . . .
Hey I'm the king of the world
You ought to hear my song . . .
You come on and measure me
I'm fifty inches long.

"I'd started listening to rap music, and it was all about 'I'm so great, I'm so big, I'm bad, I'm me!'" Harvey says. "So I thought, Yeah, I want to do that. But I want to do it in platform shoes and a leopard-print dress, all tied up, and just talk about being a woman." The album's fantastically ominous title song eclipsed the saccharine ministrations of another popular stalker

song, the Police's "Every Breath You Take." In what can also be read as a manifesto of her intensity of purpose as a writer and as a performer, Harvey intoned menacingly:

Oh you're not rid of me
Yeah you're not rid of me
I'll make you lick my injuries
I'm gonna twist your head off, see?
Till you say don't you wish you never
never met her
Don't you don't you wish you never never
met her.

Later in 1993, Harvey released her original versions of several of the songs from "Rid of Me," along with a few new songs, on an album called "4-Track Demos." But, structurally, the songs resembled those on "Dry" closely enough that Harvey, restless and ambitious, began to conceive of her next album, "To Bring You My Love," as something entirely different. She took voice lessons to increase her range. She chose new musicians—straying, for the first time, from the people with whom she'd been collaborating since 1990. And she sang from inside, not slamming fiercely up against the singer-songwriter tradition with her distinctive short narratives, as she had done before, but creating a grand and almost novelistic landscape. "I wanted to make something that felt more flowing," Harvey says. "And I wanted also to make something that felt big. I wanted to be expansive, to create a panorama."

On "To Bring You My Love" (which sold more copies than "Dry" and "Rid of Me" combined, and won Harvey two Grammy nominations), she sang the tale not of the shattered heart but of the heart that has pieced itself, jaggedly, back together. Her newly minted Vamp met life with frayed nerves and grim determination, grasping for the only kind of love that interested her: one that burns and cracks the skin. On the title track, she sings:

Climbed over mountains
Travelled the sea
Cast down on heaven
Cast down on my knees
I've lain with the devil
Cursed God above
Forsaken heaven
To bring you my love.

"It was quite a shock," Head says of "To Bring You My Love," the only PJ

Harvey album he didn't work on. "Rid of Me" sounds like exactly what they were playing a month before they recorded it. "To Bring You My Love" was bigger than I thought it was going to be, but in a different way. That is something else that I like about her—she can shock you, like David Bowie coming out with 'Young Americans.' No one expected that, and so it was a pleasant surprise."

The volume on "To Bring You My Love" changes from song to song, like a radio in search of the correct frequency, and the female personae of its eight tracks bring to mind Stephen King's Carrie, the high-school outcast who uses her special powers to avenge her feelings of hurt and loss. Harvey herself knows something about being shut out. Her most outspoken detractors have typically been women, who are often alarmed by Harvey's manipulation of femininity, by the way she manages to be enticing at her most vulnerable, without the giggling and simpering of standard girl drag. "I enjoy looking like a tart and thinking like a politician," she told an interviewer in 1995. (And Harvey's political nature does show itself from time to time, as she bounces between

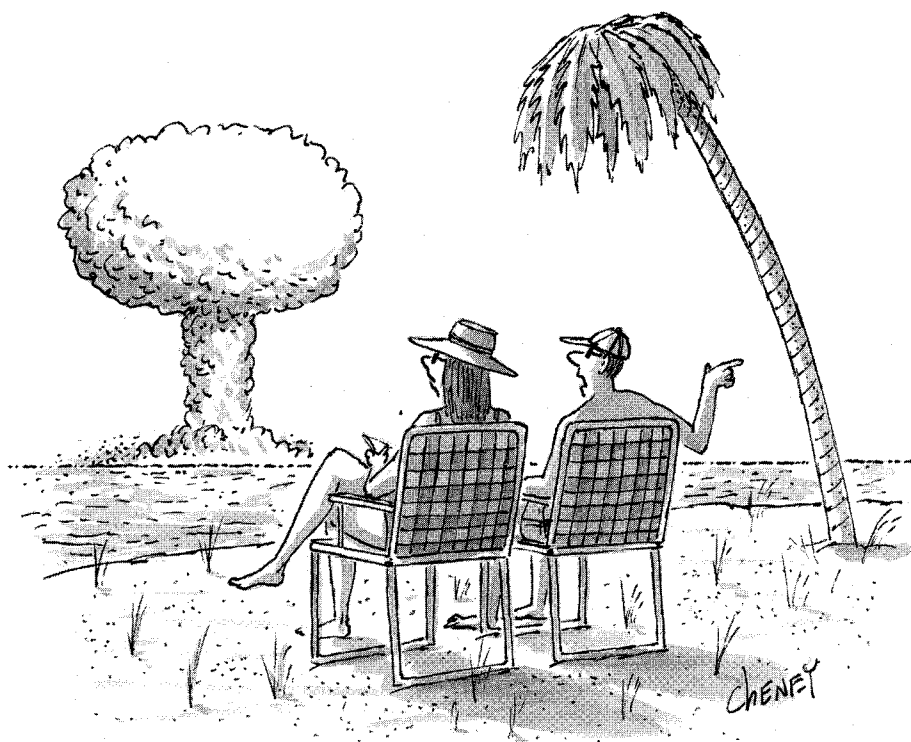
the two poles of seduction and business. "I enjoy talking to you. My mum really enjoys your writing," she said warmly at our first meeting. A few beats later, she asked, of the article I was writing, "Is it a cover?" "It's a generalization, but women treat her with great suspicion," Ellis said. Men, on the other hand, often indulge in romantic rescue fantasies. As Head explained, "Some things are too fragile to fuck with. When you sing the way Polly Harvey does, you are completely bare in front of people. And at times you have to go so far that it's quite emotionally charged." The women who do "get" her have usually laid something on the line, too. Another unorthodox singer, Björk, told me, "I can see her doing what she's doing when she's, like, sixty. So pure. She is just getting started, no?"

In fact, there have been several starts. There was the start of "Dry." The start of "To Bring You My Love." And then there are those enterprises that Harvey did not headline but which fortified her interest in collaboration, in growth. She made her acting debut in Hal Hartley's 1998 short film "The Book of Life," in which she played

Mary Magdalene in modern garb. She has also sung, played, or written lyrics for others, among them the singer Nick Cave, the Virginia-based blues-pop band Sparklehorse, the avant-garde musician Pascal Comelade, and her former Automatic Dlamini bandmate John Parish. Last year, she produced the folk-influenced dirges of Tiffany Anders's album, "Funny Cry Happy Gift." (Harvey was a fan of Anders, the daughter of the filmmaker Allison Anders, largely because she refused to follow any of the conventional rules of rhythm. "She doesn't even like to play with a metronome!" Harvey said affectionately.)

Harvey's fifth album, "Is This Desire?"—a critical but not necessarily popular success—was another start. Released in 1998, the album was stark and uncompromising, a synthesis of "To Bring You My Love" and the albums that preceded it. Almost every track features a different female character—Catherine, Joy, Elise, Angelene, Leah. And each track makes a narrative point about subject and subjectivity. How does one sing from a character's point of view? Where is the truth in the spurned lover's tale? Ellis says that, "playing with Polly, one is drowning in romanticism," but what distinguishes this album from its predecessors is its anti-romantic touch. God is no longer a symbol of hope, accepted or rejected. He simply doesn't exist. In "Joy," Harvey chants, to a sharp percussive background, "I've been believing in nothing since I was born / It never was a question." Without hope, one can see one's way clear to despair, and maybe to the acceptance of who one really is. The Vamp is laid to rest.

"It was a deeply unhappy time," Harvey says of her experience recording this album. "I had the songs, but I didn't feel confident in all of them. And I didn't know if I even wanted to make a record at that time. It's this strange collection of any number of different moods and feelings, all kind of cobbled together." When the people from Island heard it, she adds, "they said, 'Where's the single? There's no single.'" One of the songs, "A Perfect Day Elise," was released as a single, and even as a video, but there was no



"No, I believe our house is that way."

track that could work as a memorable set piece. It was rumored that "Is This Desire?" was recorded after Nick Cave, with whom Harvey had been involved, went off with a model. It was rumored that Harvey was, again, "near collapse."

Whatever the inspiration, "Is This Desire?" is her masterpiece, outstripping her most recent album, the largely upbeat "Stories from the City, Stories from the Sea," which sometimes borrows too much, vocally, from Patti Smith, and feels more self-consciously commercial. ("Why is she so damn happy?" a longtime fan asked me.) The aura of misunderstood youth and angry irony is gone, and Harvey's voice is less definitive. "Is This Desire?" was a much more personal record of a very dramatic period," Head says. "She wanted it to be the saddest record that anybody could ever imagine hearing. And it was, incredibly, and it was quite a difficult record to make. So, then, 'Stories' comes from a much more positive place." Whereas the earlier songs have a stream-of-consciousness feel to them, a purposeful reticence, Harvey's "Stories" is a direct tribute to love. In place of the pointed hilarity of "Rid of Me," whose songs all sound like declarations of war, either between men and women or within one person's consciousness, we have the unfamiliar sunniness of "Good Fortune":

Threw my bad fortune
Off the top of
A tall building
I'd rather have done it with you
Your boy's smile
Five in the morning
Looked into your eyes
And I was really in love.

I saw Harvey at the end of May, on her tour bus again, this time in Auburn Hills, Michigan. She wore a maroon cowl-neck sleeveless sweater and a black skirt, and had a camouflage jacket bundled around her. She had been on the road for nine months by then. "It's draining," she said. "It's disorienting. You get depressed. You don't know where you are or who you are. You forget why you do it in the first place. But, having said all that, I'm loving this tour. Every night that we play a show I know why it's impor-

tant. It's where I feel most connected with my songs, my music. You're playing to people. You can see reactions. They're giving me back what I give them."

In the end, none of the commercial images that people have tried to attach to Harvey over the years—neither "melancholic feminist" nor "hunking, hairy, leather-clad monster"—have stuck, and her particular brand of rock remains just that, her own, inaccessible to many of the U2 fans who flock into stadiums every night after her opening set. Where Harvey, in knee-high patent-leather boots that look like two exclamation points, introduces nastiness, wit, and isolation, U2's recent work cooks up communal comfort of a kind that asks less of the audience. "It's a challenge, certainly," Harvey said when a radio interviewer asked her how the current tour was going. "You know, it's difficult to play in front of an audience that isn't there to see me. And that can be a good thing as well. It makes me play—makes us all play—in a different way. And, you know, sometimes the audience really seems to be enjoying what we're doing, and other times they don't. It's a good discipline."

On the bus, she sipped tea and popped an echinacea-and-honey lozenge to coat her throat for that night's performance, then continued: "All my life, when I've been to see bands play, this is what I look for—I want to watch someone who's going to shock me, stun me, make me feel scared, make me feel happy, just set me alive. I want to see someone who's going to make the hairs on my arms and neck stand up, and when I see an artist like that it's unbeatable. So that's always been what I've aspired to, to be able to set people alight in some way."

Wherever she happens to be, Harvey doesn't like to stray too far from the questions of grace, or of vernacular. Before heading off to play the Palace of Auburn Hills, she mentioned that she was reading a contemporary translation of the Bible. "It's written in modern street language," she said. "It's got things like 'Follow this path, don't follow that path, or you'll end up on Skid Row.'" She laughed. "Yo, Lazarus, how ya doing?" ♦

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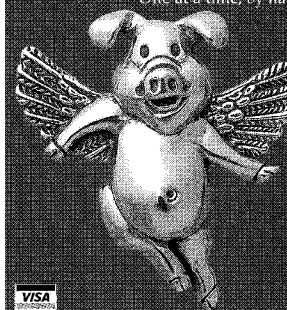
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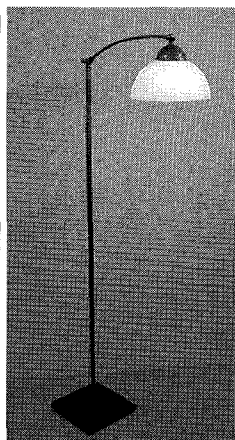
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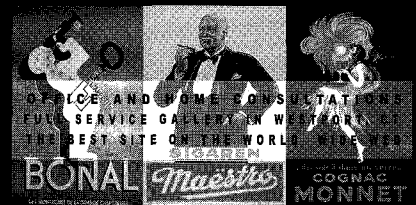
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U.S. JOURNAL

BAND FOR HIRE

You pay, they play—weddings, bar mitzvahs, birthdays, whatever.

BY MARK SINGER

LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK

While driving to work one day recently with Greg Spooner—or, more precisely, while idling in hair-tearing Hamptons-bound stop-and-barely-go Long Island Expressway traffic late on a Friday afternoon in July—I asked him what he was thinking. Spooner is a musician with thirty years of professional experience, an adaptable generalist who seems equally at ease with rhythm and blues, rock, jazz, pop, swing, Motown, funk, disco, reggae, salsa, waltzes, Broadway show tunes, and just about anything else he might be called upon to play at a wedding, bar mitzvah, bat mitzvah, society

soirée, corporate or charitable affair, non-particular-reason party, studio session, restaurant engagement, or night-club gig. He's also a bandleader, record producer, and teacher who prides himself, above all, on this admirable trait: if you hire him, he shows up on time. In an hour and forty-five minutes, Spooner and six other musicians—all regular members of his combo, Rhythm Ignition—were due at a yacht club on Shelter Island, where an investment banker's fastidious wife expected them to entertain a hundred and fifty guests at his sixtieth-birthday party. We had what would be, in optimal conditions, an hour of driving ahead of us, and then a who-knew-how-long wait in line to board a



Cyriese Lambert singing at the Crystal Plaza. "An afternoon wedding is the thing I dread most."

ferry, plus a ten-minute ride to the island.

"What I'm thinking," Spooner said, "is, This is not good. So I'm also thinking we're gonna get out of this. Because, in this business, *you cannot be late*. If it's a wedding, people are spending upward of fifty thousand dollars. I don't just play at the reception, I often play the keyboard during the ceremony. Imagine, after all this money—the gown, the cake, the caterer, the photographer, the flowers, everything—the pianist is late. You have to be anal about time, but you have no choice. So what I'm thinking is, This just can't happen."

Ten minutes passed, the situation improved—we were moving, though hardly testing the speed limit—and Spooner resumed reciting his autobiography, a conversation we'd begun as we drove away from a repair shop on Long Island, where he'd taken his car, a Mercedes-Benz sedan, for a brake job. Spooner grew up in Brooklyn, in Bedford-Stuyvesant, the youngest of five children and by far the most musical: a tuba player in the grade-school orchestra; a one-valve bugler in a drum-and-bugle corps; a self-taught pi-

anist whose father, a policeman and moonlighting jazz pianist, gave him an electric keyboard and amplifier for his fifteenth birthday; and a high-school student of music theory and conducting. One of his older sisters lived on Long Island; he often visited her, and eventually he was invited to join a suburban rhythm-and-blues combo that picked up jobs at community-center dances and ladies' garden-club teas. At sixteen, when he landed a steady Sunday-night dance-club gig that paid forty bucks, he decided he'd found his life's work. He also decided on his life's dream: one day, to play backup and tour with a big-name recording artist.

After a few years as the keyboardist in a ten-piece R. & B. band called Manchild, he concluded that what he needed, above all, was to stay home and practice. "I'd never seriously studied the piano," he said. "I was just skating along, lucky to be doing what I was doing. I had to improve my piano chops. So I quit the band." His retirement lasted two weeks—interrupted by a report that the Joneses, a vocal quartet with a recent hit recording, "Sugar Pie Guy," needed a keyboard player.

He gets that job and—*ba-da-bum*—the Joneses get hired by the R. & B. singer Gwen McCrae, to go on tour as her backup band. Just like that, a reasonable approximation of Spooner's fantasy had materialized. Over the next two years, he saw almost every state, and from time to time the folks back home could catch him on television in the company of megatalents like Dick Clark and Wolfman Jack.

Along the way, McCrae had a falling out with her musical director. She offered Spooner that job, plus a salary of five hundred dollars a week, and at the age of twenty he found himself in an orchestra pit at Disneyland, conducting a twelve-piece band while she strutted onstage. "We're not in Brooklyn anymore," he told himself, in so many words. Then—again, just like that—he literally was. Gwen McCrae got pregnant, the tour ended; and what came next for Spooner was—basically nothing. "I sat around for a year, waiting for another big gig," he said. He had discovered the flip side of what it meant to live a certain kind of musician's life.

Over the next decade, Spooner attended college (where he greatly improved



he says. "If people aren't ready to party, they won't party." Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

his piano sight-reading but didn't complete a degree), held a couple of nine-to-five jobs, married and had a son (he was already the father of a nine-year-old boy), and never stopped hoping that he was on the cusp of something auspicious. Four nights a week, he played with an eight-piece band that had a long-running gig at a restaurant on the Upper West Side. This provided an education of sorts, as a procession of promoters and weaselly would-be managers talked one good game after another about getting the band a record deal. Net result: no record deal and, in time, no more band. A more fruitful learning experience was work as a session musician—playing piano and synthesizer on other people's albums and absorbing the nuts and bolts of sound engineering and record producing. He'd been doing that for a couple of years when he was approached by a guitarist named Fred Wells.

"Fred said, 'I have a great gig. It pays decent money, very easy, just come down,'" Spooner recalled. "Then he told me it was a wedding, and I said, 'I don't play weddings. That's what old guys do who have nothing left to do.' But I liked Fred, and he said please. The job was at Tavern on the Green. It was Fred on guitar, Al McDowell on bass, Joe Saulter on drums, Frank Abel on piano, and Mel Speller, a percussionist who also sang—all well-known session players. I was there to provide horns and strings with my synthesizer. This was back when MTV didn't feature many black musicians, and Billy Joel had made a video with this group that he called Billy Joel and the Affordables. These guys were the Affordables. The rest of the time, like when they played at weddings and parties, their name was Rhythm Ignition. After I worked that wedding at Tavern on the Green, I just looked at the whole business differently. These guys sounded great together and they were having fun. I made, I think, a hundred and fifty dollars, I got paid at midnight, and I went straight home. It opened my eyes."

About thirty cars were in line ahead of us when we reached the ferry terminal in the village of Greenport. Still, as Spooner had predicted, he managed to deliver himself to a big white tent at the Shelter Island Yacht Club on time (give or take thirty seconds) and in uniform (black tuxedo pants, black jacket, black shirt).

During Spooner's twenty years with Rhythm Ignition, there have been serial personnel changes—the original Affordables have long since moved on, as have many of their successors—but an ego-free credo has always prevailed. "This is a service industry," Spooner tells prospective hires. "You're not here to be a hero or a star. When you're playing with other groups, that's different. If you're in a club, that's different. Think of this as like being in the Army. You're on the stage, but the party's not about you. It's about the bride and groom." The band's basic objective has also remained intact: getting the crowd out of their chairs and onto the dance floor and shaking whatever moving parts they've got. "I always check in with the hosts a couple of weeks ahead of time," Spooner said. "I fax a list of songs they might like, and they can add any requests. But, generally, I encourage people to trust us to decide what works best. It's like fishing, figuring out what they'll go for. And, if you're doing it right, once you get 'em up you can keep 'em up."

A typically boffo Rhythm Ignition performance—the Shelter Island event proved to be a prime example—unfolds in the following fashion: As the cocktail hour winds down, the band sets the mood with jazzy Motown classics like Grover Washington, Jr.'s "Mister Magic" and Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On." While Spooner adjusts the amplifiers, he consults with Cyriese Lambert, who is one of Rhythm Ignition's three singers as well as the band's co-leader. The other players—Randy London (drums), Kevin Bennett (guitar), Rodney Goff (saxophone), Eddie Cordew (bass), Karen Kenney (vocals), and Bill Hudson (vocals)—limber up and start forgetting about their day jobs. Party guests stroll past the bandstand in various states of stilted self-consciousness, nodding at the musicians and smiling faintly, applauding daintily, diffidently jiggling their wrists and elbows. The band members themselves, once they find their groove, stay constantly in motion. If, after the first couple of songs, the dance floor is underpopulated, Lambert, a willowy soprano who cites Nancy Wilson, Anita Baker, and Sarah Vaughan as her influences, tries a little friendly persuasion. "All right, we want to see the real dancers out there now," she says, leading into "Celebration," a dependable jump-starter.

In the unlikely event that that doesn't do the trick, she's perfectly willing to single out wallflowers and shame them into action. ("You people at Table 5—I have a guest list here. I don't want to have to start calling your names. Let's get with it.")

Twenty minutes into the opening set, gray-haired guys in button-down dress shirts, bow ties, madras trousers, and tasseled loafers have doffed their green blazers and are getting in touch with their latent sense of rhythm. Their streaked-blond pastel-clad wives are out there with them, looking pleasantly surprised. By the time the band plays "Twist and Shout," "In the Midnight Hour," and "Mustang Sally," the affair has turned into a sing-along. Just before Lambert, who works a forty-hour week for a group of cardiologists in New Jersey, lays a little Roberta Flack on the crowd, she offers the stress-test challenge: "As long as you can dance, that's how long we can play."

Actually, they can play four hours before the meter runs out. It's usually after the dinner entrée has been cleared, when the forties medley ("In the Mood," "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy," "Don't Get Around Much") segues to the disco medley ("Bad Girls," "Disco Inferno," "I Will Survive"), that Lambert, a voluptuous exhibitionist, takes a wireless microphone out on the dance floor and cavorts with the male guest of honor in a manner that only a corpse with a negative attitude could resist. The foxtrot it is not. Then Bill Hudson, an anatomical wonder in his mid-fifties, leaves the bandstand and, with a series of splits and limbo moves, demonstrates the frightening elasticity of his hamstrings and quadriceps.

There's usually a slow dance or two during the final set, which otherwise feels like a sprint to the finish: "We Are Family" (Sister Sledge), "Believe" (Cher), "You Only Have to Say You Love Me" (Hannah Jones), "It's Not Right but It's Okay" (Whitney Houston), and, almost always the same encore, "What Is Hip" (Tower of Power). A dozen or so guests approach Spooner and ask for his business card. The hosts are beaming, oblivious—and why should they care?—that forty-eight hours later none of the members of Rhythm Ignition will be able to remember their names. When I asked Cyriese Lambert whether she could recall a single bridal couple from the few thousand weddings she's

attended, she said, "Well, there is one. But, you know, that's because I sang at my own wedding."

The Shelter Island party marked the end of a nautical interlude for the band, following a wedding on Block Island and a Fourth of July party aboard a yacht in New York Harbor. Rhythm Ignition's next two engagements were distinctly landlocked—a Protestant wedding with a Saturday-evening back-yard reception in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and a Sunday-afternoon Irish Catholic-Jewish wedding at a catering hall in Livingston, New Jersey. On Saturday, I met Lambert at her home, in Westfield, New Jersey, and from there we continued to Allentown, along with her son, Rock Steward, a polite and athletic fellow in his mid-twenties who is Rhythm Ignition's one-man road crew. Lambert looked tired; she'd just survived a ten-hour hair-braiding ordeal that had kept her up until four in the morning. Also, she was preoccupied because she and Spooner had been searching unsuccessfully for the music and lyrics of a Natalie Merchant song that the groom had requested for a featured dance with his mother.

Whenever the need arises to learn an unfamiliar song, Spooner and Lambert consult their library of fake books, volumes that contain lyrics, melodies, and chord changes for thousands of tunes. (The band rarely rehearses, a fact they regard as an emblem of professionalism rather than of laxity.) There's also the option of downloading music from the Internet, which the band members can listen to while driving to a gig. In a crunch, Lambert's mobile pager has an electronic message feature that enables her to receive an emergency lyrics dispatch during a party in progress. (Yo! Lester Lanin, check it out!)

"This song they're requesting is supposedly called 'Thank You for Your Kindness,'" she said. "Greg can't find it. I couldn't find it. I just talked to him and he said he felt the same way I do—like throwing up."

Not long after we arrived in Allentown, the crisis passed. The song title, it turned out, was "Kind and Generous," and Karen Kenney knew it, and it was in one of Spooner's fake books.

Wedding guests were arriving from the church, and as they began milling on the



"The global-positioning system says we're all in the wrong building."

sloped lawn above the banquet tent I chatted with Randy London, the drummer, who recounted how he'd stayed busy since I'd last seen him, eight days earlier. He'd played in pickup combos at two private parties, practiced for a recording session and spent ten hours in the recording studio, taken a drum lesson, practiced some more, played one jazz club gig and another R. & B. club gig, and worked in his garden. He'd also driven a FedEx delivery truck for about twenty hours, a part-time day job he has held on to for eleven years, mainly for the medical insurance and pension benefits, perks that aren't part of the compensation package in a non-union wedding band. First and foremost, London considers himself a professional musician, and the same holds true for Kevin Bennett (day job: computer graphics for the American Bible Society), Bill Hudson (insurance-company customer service), Karen Kenney (home for troubled adolescents), and Rodney Goff (mortgage-loan officer). Besides Spooner, Eddie Cordew is the only band member who derives his entire income from music. Until a couple of years ago, he was working as a manager in a bedding store. Then, driving home from a gig one night, he fell asleep at the wheel and "woke up a foot away from a tree." At that point, his wife delivered an ultimatum: "Either/or, Eddie—you choose."

"It was easy," Eddie told me. "Lots of times, I'd be coming home so late on a Sunday night I'd pull over to the side of

the road, and then show up for work Monday still wearing a tuxedo. When my wife told me I had to choose, she said, 'You know, you're happiest when you're playing.' Well, of course, we all are. Who wouldn't be?"

For the band, the Allentown affair was a slam dunk—youngish crowd on a Saturday night, excellent partying skills, proper appreciation of Karen Kenney's dazzling renditions of "Respect" and "Boogie Oogie Oogie." I'd had a fine time myself, and I was disappointed by my failure to sustain a totally positive attitude when we took a few wrong turns on our way back to the interstate and spent an extra half hour wandering around the Pennsylvania countryside. But I was imagining how I was going to feel when the sun rose in about four hours and I had to drive to Far Rockaway, Queens, to meet Rodney Goff, en route to the one-o'clock wedding reception in Jersey.

One reason I wanted to commute with Goff was that he and Spooner go way back together, to high school and the Gwen McCrae tour and the days of trying to get a record deal. Spooner, who doesn't trust his own memory, assured me that Goff's was excellent, and I wasn't disappointed. For instance, he not only remembered the name of one of their long-defunct band's would-be managers; he remembered that the guy's most glorious show-business moment had been an ap-

pearance in a Fruit of the Loom underwear commercial dressed up like a grape.

Although Goff has been playing with Rhythm Ignition for only a few months, he has plenty of wedding-band wisdom, the product of several years spent with Steven Scott Orchestras, one of the biggest booking agencies on the East Coast. He was looking forward to the venue for the day's wedding, the Crystal Plaza, where the décor has Trumpian aspirations and the catering doctrine adheres to the principle that until a guest pops a hernia he's probably still hungry. When Rhythm Ignition plays at the Crystal Plaza, which they do forty or fifty times a year, they actually assume a different stage name—Starflight—and the band expands from eight to as many as fifteen members. These bookings are arranged by Barry Herman Entertainment, an agency whose eponymous owner happens to be related by marriage to the family that owns the Crystal Plaza.

Herman also represents a black band called Cashmere, which he is very proud of, even though they're "not as versatile" as Starflight. "They're more inclined toward straight funk and Motown," he said. "It got to the point where I told them, 'Look, you're gonna have to play some real Jewish songs.' They resisted, but I finally got them to learn 'Rumania, Rumania,' 'Shalom Aleichem,' and 'Joe and Paul,' a Yiddish song. Their pronunciation is now, like, perfect."

Everyone in the band arrived in time to sample the Crystal Plaza's sixty-five different appetizers during the cocktail hour, and the party got off to what sounded like a promising start—a brassy "I'll Be Around," the Spinners hit, followed by "Saving All My Love for You," with Karen Kenney singing lead—but

the dance floor was already bare when the time came to clear it for the formal introduction of the bridal party. The bride's family was Jewish and the groom's was Catholic, and in a foamy commitment to multiculturalism the band—nine African-Americans, plus white guys on trombone and percussion—played "Hava Nagila," "Siman Tov U Mazel Tov," and "Shalom Aleichem," followed by a jaunty Irish jig, which temporarily got the crowd moving. But, in the end, no matter what the band tried, the affair had trouble staying airborne. The previous night, Lambert had warned me that this was likely to happen. "An afternoon wedding's the thing I dread most," she said. "You can pull out all the tricks you know, but if people aren't ready to party they won't party." At one point, Spooner exhorted the guests to will themselves into a more Saturday-night frame of mind—to no avail. Instead, there were several requests to lower the volume.

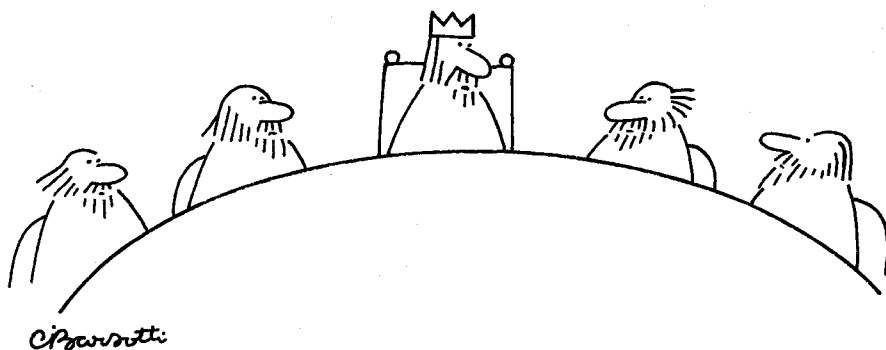
"We have to work harder when they keep telling us to turn it down," Kenney told me. "We can't sing those three-part harmonies we like to get down with."

"I don't know what they expected," Lambert said. "An eleven-piece band can only get so quiet."

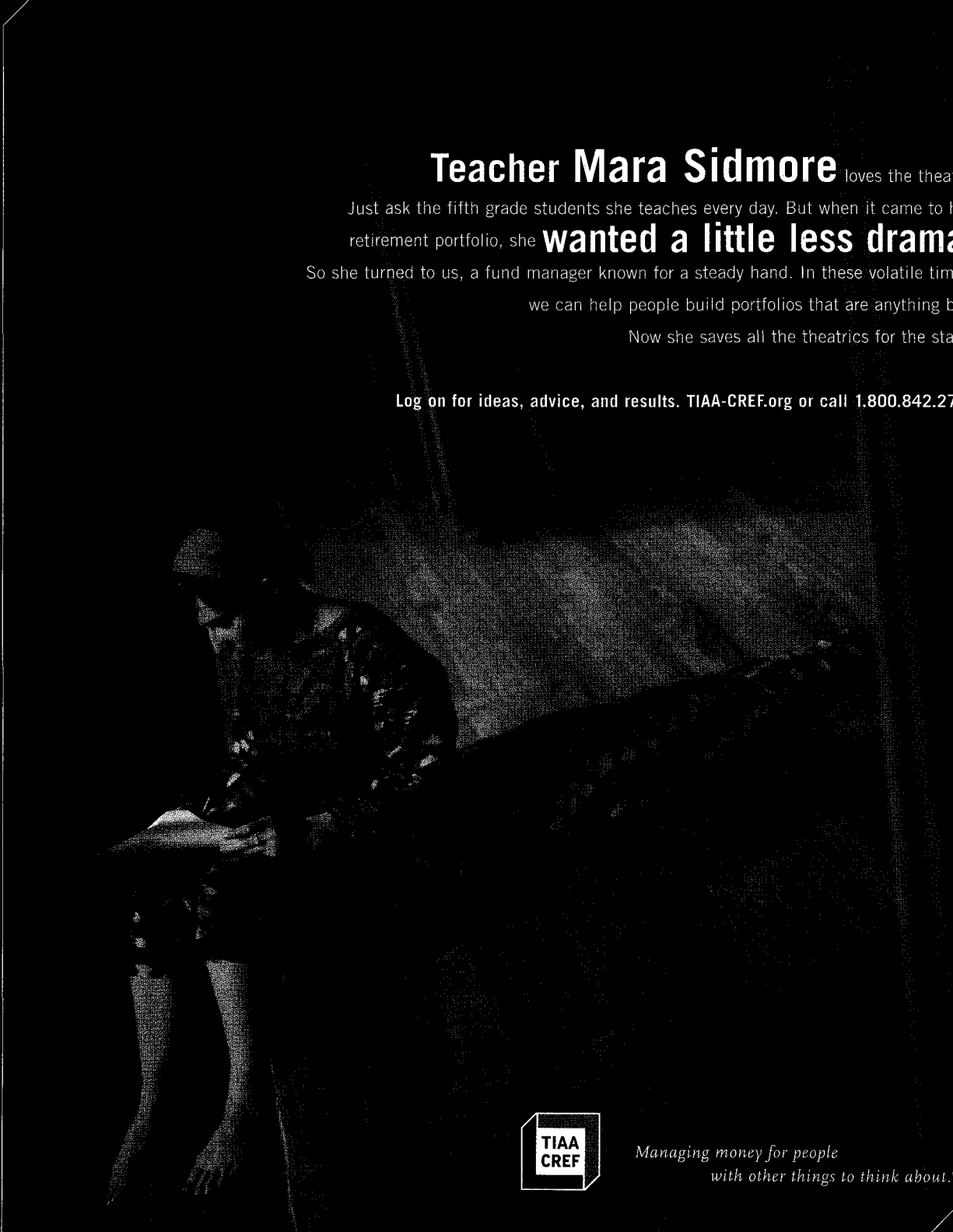
On the ride back to Far Rockaway, Rodney Goff was philosophical. "Sometimes it's just not a party-type crowd," he said. "You try to find that out when you meet ahead of time with the bride and groom. I had a job one time—this wasn't a wedding, it was a bat mitzvah in Manhattan. The family, this Dr. Silverstein and his wife, tell me they want to do a candlelighting ceremony, which is an elaborate thing where you invite the grandparents, the cousins, the uncles to light a candle and you play a different song for each person. I arrive at the party

and the parents throw this list of songs at me that I haven't seen before. Oh, yeah, and the challah bread was late getting there. We start playing during the cocktail hour and the maître d' comes and tells us to stall because the bread is stuck in traffic. We played the same song for twenty minutes. The wife is just an unbelievably nervous-type woman. She's not relaxing and enjoying the party. I'm telling her, 'Look, I do this every week.' So there I am during the candlelighting ceremony, and I'm passing around the sheet music for all these songs they just laid on me, and I'm calling the father of the bat-mitzvah girl Dr. Silverstein. Finally, at the end of the evening, someone yells out, 'His name is Silverman!' Then I look at the sheet and I'm like, Oh, yeah. *Silverman*. It was too bad that name thing went down. You know what, though? In a lot of ways, everyone had a good time." And I'm sure the band did, too.

But a good time is still not quite enough. Cyriese Lambert entered a vocal competition earlier this summer, sponsored by Anheuser-Busch and held at a jazz club in Harlem. She sang "My Funny Valentine" and "Caravan," and surprised herself by winning first prize, which entitles her to ten hours of free studio recording time. Karen Kenney told me that she, too, is eager to record a demo, because, though her work with adolescents has its rewards, "if I could be a full-time singer, I'd do that." Meanwhile, Greg Spooner is about to sign a one-year agreement appointing Barry Herman as the band's exclusive booking agent. One consequence is that, for the duration of the contract, Rhythm Ignition officially ceases to exist; Starflight, however, is guaranteed at least sixty performing dates per year, which translates into several million calories' worth of appetizers and desserts at the Crystal Plaza. Above all, it allows Spooner to concentrate on strictly artistic endeavors; most weekdays, he can be found in his studio, writing music and producing demos, mainly for female vocalists. The odds that he'll break through are long, but he keeps his overhead low. His studio is in a Brooklyn brownstone owned by one of his sisters—the same house he grew up in; in fact, it's the bedroom he slept in as a child. Musically, he has covered a lot of ground, but for the time being he's still back where he started. ♦



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THE SEARCHERS

Radiohead's unquiet revolution.

BY ALEX ROSS

On a hot day in May, the city of Bilbao was shaken by a velvety roar, not unlike the sound of a jet plane waiting on a tarmac. At one end of Calle de Iparraguirre, which cuts across the town, the silver shell of the Guggenheim Museum was glistening in the sun. For a moment, it seemed as if the noise were coming from there—as if the building were about to lift off and rocket elsewhere. In fact, the source of the disturbance was a local bullring, the Vista Alegre, where a German experimental d.j. named Christoph de Babalon was testing his gear. He was the opening act for Radiohead, a five-man rock band from Oxford, England. Radiohead fans were gathered at the entrance, staring up at the sound and asking what it meant. One had on a Kafka T-shirt, and others wore shirts with a Radiohead logo, which can only be described as a demon in tears.

A side door led to a concrete corridor, where the bulls run on an ordinary day. From there, planks reached out to a temporary stage. Christoph was in the center, eying his mixer and his CD players. With ice-blond hair and black sunglasses, he looked like a young Bond villain, but he turned out to be a friendly, chatty sort of sonic terrorist. "I am familiar with dark, small clubs," he said after the sound check. "Now it is like I am in a gladiator film." He mentioned some of his musical influences, which included avant-garde figures like Merzbow and the composer Morton Feldman. "Sometimes I work with beats, sometimes with layers," he said. "Tonight I do layers."

Popular music in the year 2001 is in a state of suspense. No one can say where the mystery train is going. On the one

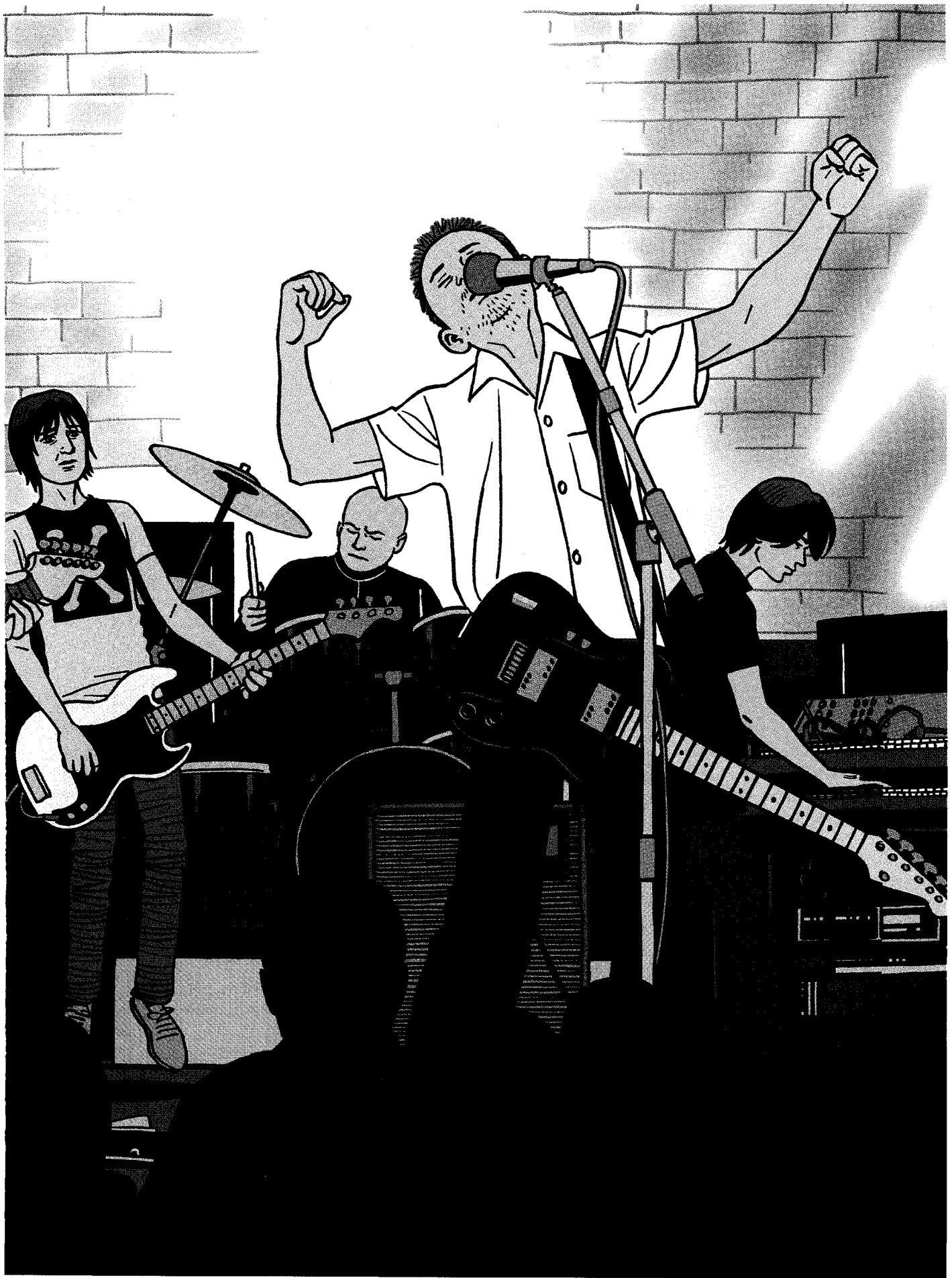
hand, the Top Forty chart is overrun with dancers, models, actors, and the like; on the other hand, there are signs that pop music is once again becoming a safe place for creative musicians. The world fame of Radiohead is a case in point. Having established themselves with tuneful guitar rock in the nineties, the members of this band took the risk of doing as they liked, and they discovered things about the marketplace which others had missed. Last year, they released an album titled "Kid A," an eerily comforting blend of rock riffs, jazz chords, classical textures, and electronic noise, which, in a demolition of conventional wisdom, went to No. 1 on the Billboard chart. "Amnesiac," its like-minded successor, came out in June and is doing just as well. Radiohead's selling point is not their identification with any one genre but their way of ranging over music as a whole. They have intensity, intelligence, a personality in sound. In Bilbao, they were present in spirit before they played. The idea of placing a German d.j. in a Spanish bullring was Radiohead to the core—a tricky, eclectic song waiting to happen.

Christoph went to his dressing room, and the stage was empty for a while. Two shirtless old men sat on stone steps, looking as though they had not moved since Franco died. Radiohead's gear basked in the sun. On the left-hand side was a rack of guitars—twenty-three in all. Up front, in an area set aside for Ed O'Brien, one of three guitarists in the band, was a tangle of pedals, samplers, and inch-thick cords. In the center of the stage, to be shared by Colin Greenwood, the bass player, and Thom Yorke, the singer, were various keyboards, a piano, and an upright bass. Equipment

ILLUSTRATION BY JAIME HERNANDEZ

Ed O'Brien, Colin Greenwood, Phil Selway, Thom Yorke, and Jonny Greenwood: combining boyish riddles with sophisticated musical games.







for Colin's younger brother, Jonny Greenwood, stood on the right: more guitars, more keyboards, a xylophone, a transistor radio, a sci-fi stack of analog synthesizers, and a modified ondes martenot, one of the earliest electronic instruments. The ondes martenot is controlled by a ring that slides along a wire; fewer than a hundred people have mastered it, and Jonny is one. The only really conventional-looking apparatus was the drum set, although you could tell by some distress on the edges of the drums that the player, Phil Selway, had attacked the sides as well as the skins.

Backstage, the members of Radiohead were eating dinner. Colin Greenwood hovered over the catering table, inspecting an array of Basque dishes. He is typical of the group in that he looks nothing like a celebrity who has sold fifteen million records. He is thirty-two years old, with jet-black hair and large, kindly eyes. He is easily distracted and delighted by the world around him, favoring the words "mad," "brilliant," and "amazing"—the last spoken with a long, liquid stress on the second syllable. He has a habit of suddenly burying his face in his hands, as if he were sinking into despair, or falling asleep; after a moment, his face lights up again. Lavishly well-read, he can talk at length about almost any topic under the sun—Belgian fashion; the stories of John Cheever; the ef-

fect of different types of charcoal on barbecued meat—but he gets embarrassed by his erudition and cuts himself off by saying, "I'm rambling." He is not above wearing a T-shirt that says "Life's a beach and then you shag." You might peg him as a cultish young neo-Marxist professor, or as the editor of a hip quarterly. But he is a rock star, with several Web pages devoted to him.

"It's full on out there, isn't it?" Greenwood said, looking toward the bullring, which was filling up with fans. "I'm scared." He occupied himself by talking about "Faust's Metropolis," Alexandra Richie's thousand-page history of Berlin. Outside, Christoph began to play for real, and was received in bemused silence.

An hour later, Radiohead hit the stage with a confidence that had been invisible before the show. The sound was huge, but it was awash in colors, contrasts, and detail. It was grand in effect, cool in tone, dark in mood. The set was a mixture of older tunes, from the band's breakthrough albums of the mid-nineties—"The Bends" and "OK Computer"—and newer ones, from "Kid A" and "Amnesiac." The old songs had choruses that the fans knew by heart, but the new ones, which have been described as "anti-commercial" in the rock press, made the crowd dance harder. "Idiotique" set off fierce rhythmic clapping, even though it was dominated by jagged beats, computer-music samples, and

squawks from the old-school synths. It must have helped that the singer, when he was done singing, launched into a demonically silly dance, kicking his legs as if someone were firing a gun at his feet. It may also have helped, on an unconscious level, that love-drunk chords from "Tristan und Isolde" lurked at the heart of the song, courtesy of a Paul Lansky composition called "Mild und Leise."

In the middle of the set, Radiohead played a song called "Airbag," which showed why this band is taken as seriously as any since the Beatles. It was a rugged ritual, full of cabalistic exchanges, with each player taking a decisive role. Jonny started off with a melody that snaked along in uneven time—one-two-three-one-two-three—one-two—and swayed between A major and F major. O'Brien added leaner, brighter curlicues on guitar. Selway came in with a precise but heavily syncopated beat. Then Yorke began to sing, in a well-schooled, plaintive voice, an oblique account of a near-fatal collision: "In the next world war / In a jackknifed juggernaut / I am born again." At the mention of war, Colin let loose a jumpy bass line, giving a funky spin to the hymns in the treble. The music cut through a jumble of verses and choruses, then held fast to a single chord, as Yorke fell into synch with O'Brien's chiming lines. Just before the end, Colin grinned, leaped in the air a couple of times, and seized hold of his brother's tune, the one that had set the song in motion. The doubling of the theme had a kind of thunderous logic, as if an equation had been solved. The interplay was as engaging to the mind as anything that has been done in classical music recently, but you could jump up and down to it.

In the old days, rock bands had a haircut, a lingo, a house style. The disconcerting thing about Radiohead is that its members do not really look or act alike. They are basically a group of smart English guys in their late twenties and early thirties. They read books, but they also check the football scores. Three are married; two have kids; all live in Oxford, where they grew up. Thom Yorke, who writes most of the songs, is compact, boyish, and impish; he has a lethally quick mind and a subtly powerful charisma. Ed O'Brien, almost a foot taller

than Yorke, has the jutting jaw and floppy bangs of an actor in a period war movie; he is suave and direct and seems to have rolled in from a different posse. Jonny Greenwood, a lanky figure with unruly black hair, is more cautious than his brother Colin, but when he starts talking he excitedly involves himself in dense, Victorian sentences, biting clauses out of the air. Phil Selway is bald and sweet-faced, and talks in a gentle voice. He looks like the nice, ordinary one, but he often has a trace of a wicked smile.

How these five mildly eccentric young Englishmen became the Knights Templar of rock and roll is anyone's guess. They are not too sure themselves. "Everyone comes to us with their heads bowed, expecting to be inducted into the mystery of Radiohead," Selway said. He made a King Tut gesture with his arms. "We were hoist on our own petard with that. At a certain point, around 1997, we were simply overwhelmed and had to vanish for a bit. This was our honest reaction to the situation we were in. But some people thought we were playing a game, or had started taking ourselves too seriously. Really, we don't want people twiddling their goatees over our stuff. What we do is pure escapism."

What happened to Radiohead in 1997 was that they caught a wave of generational anxiety. The album "OK Computer," with titles like "Paranoid Android," "Karma Police," and "Climbing Up the Walls," pictured the onslaught of the information age and a young person's panicky embrace of it. Yorke's lyrics seem a mixture of overheard conversations, techno-speak, and fragments of a harsh diary: "I trust I can rely on your vote"; "An airbag saved my life"; "Ambition makes you look pretty ugly." The songs offered images of riot police at political rallies, anguished lives in pretty suburbs, yuppies freaking out, sympathetic aliens hovering overhead. Yorke even dared to describe the feeling of letdown that follows a blast of hype, such as the one his band was producing. "When it comes, it's so-so," he sang. "It always ends up driveling." The album sold more than four million copies worldwide, enabling the group to become, by 1999, an independent operation. Radiohead were the poster boys for a certain kind of knowing alienation—as the Talking Heads and R.E.M. had been before.

Radiohead remain a magnet for misfits everywhere, but their outsider status is only a part of their appeal. What fans seem to like, even more than the content of the songs, is the sense that the band members have labored over every aspect of the product. They are skilled, first of all, at inventing the kinds of riddles that teen-agers enjoy unravelling. The records, the videos, the official Web site, even the T-shirts all cry out for interpretation. Why are words spelled funny? What are all these charts and diagrams? What about the grinning bears and crying Minotaurs? "We liked worrying over that kind of thing when we were kids, and we're still in the same mind-set a lot of the time," Selway said. "But it's a bit incidental. We're dead set on the music. That's the thread running through this whole thing. We met at school playing music together, and we still get together over music now. We like solving musical puzzles. That's what Thom gives us."

A Radiohead song is usually written in three stages. First, Yorke comes up with a rough sketch; then Jonny, who

studied classical composition in school, fleshes out the harmony; finally, the others digest it for a while, working out their parts on their own. It can be months, even years, before a song comes together in a way that satisfies all of them. Take away any one element—Selway's flickering rhythmic grid, for example, fierce in execution and trippy in effect—and Radiohead are a different band. The five together form a single mind, with its own habits and tics—the Radiohead Composer. This personality can be glimpsed in the daily bustle of the group, but you can never meet it face to face, because it lives in the music. A lot of what has been written about Radiohead—there are six books, hundreds of magazine articles, and millions of words on the Internet—circles around an absent center.

During Radiohead's recent tours, the best picture of the band at work came during the sound checks. Yorke led these pre-show rituals with the assurance of a seasoned conductor with limited rehearsal time. He'd shout "Next!" just as a song was building to its climax. All



"Do you ever feel as though the portfolio of your manhood should have included combat?"

problems had to be addressed on the spot. At one point, Colin said, "That's something we can work on later," whereupon Yorke muttered to himself, and Colin added, a little wearily, "It is also something we can work on now." There were moments, though, when Yorke was at a loss. Once, during a run-through of "The Tourist," he forgot the final chord, and so did everyone else—including Jonny, who had written the song. "Does anyone have a copy of 'OK Computer'?" Yorke called out. No one did. The Composer was taking a nap. A couple of weeks later, the problem still hadn't been solved. "Shall we nominate an ending and play through it to see what it sounds like?" O'Brien said, impatiently. "What

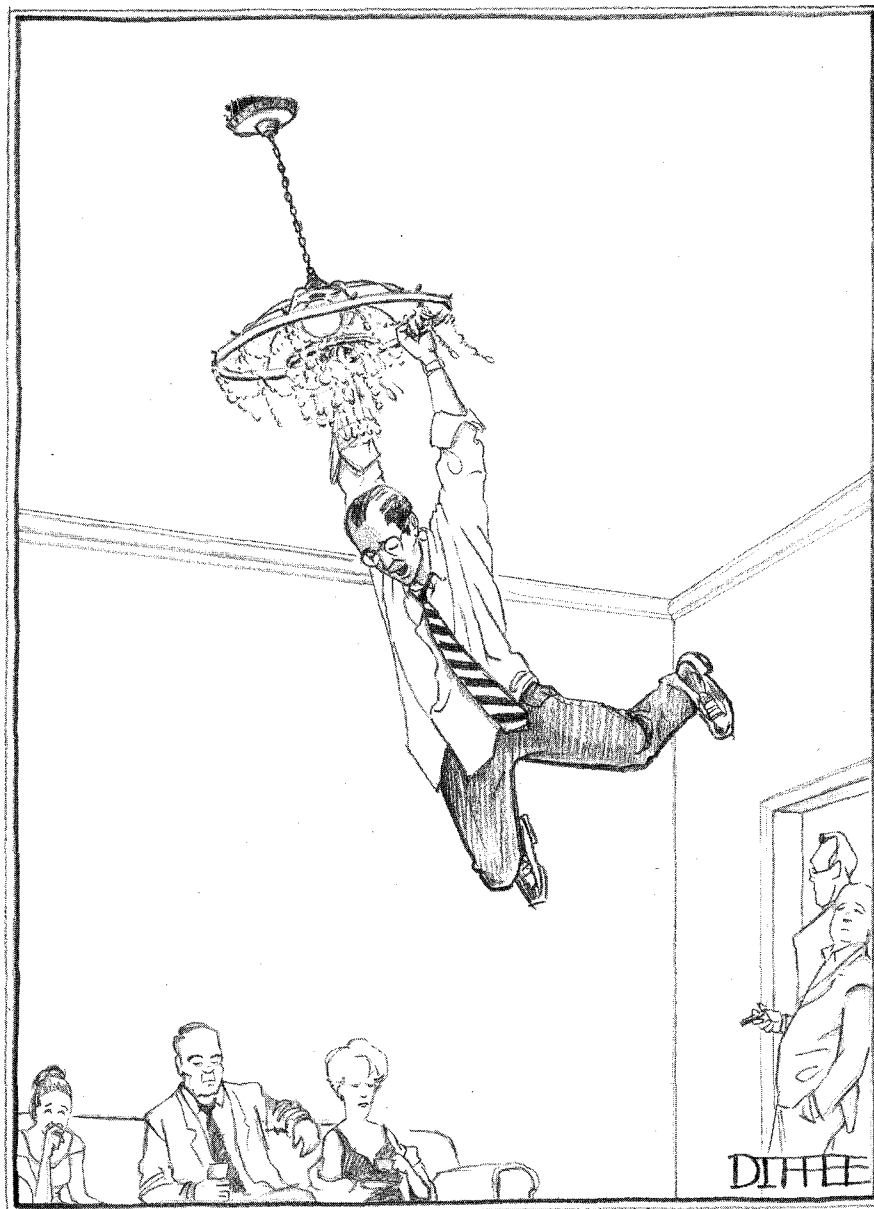
do you have in mind?" Yorke said. "D7, perhaps?" "O.K., let's try it."

On their days off, Radiohead dissolve into literate anarchy. They buzz with curiosity, pepper strangers with questions, digest the answers, and wander off on their own. On the day after the Bilbao show, they took a ramble around the city, and the city was caught off guard. One stop was the Guggenheim, where they had an unsuspecting tour guide named Maria. While Maria was still trying to muster everyone in one place, Colin began reciting facts about the structure: "The limestone had to be cut by a computer. Each curve has its own algorithm. I read an article somewhere. The A/C is fucking bril-

liant, man. Air pumps out of that vent way up there and goes all the way down here." When Colin arrived in front of Richard Serra's massive steel sculptures, he declared that one of the pieces had gone missing from its usual place. "This is wrong," he said. "There should be a second plate bisecting the first." Selway and O'Brien started making fun of him—"Can't have gone far"; "Call lost and found"—but Maria confirmed that, in fact, the sculptures had been rearranged. As Radiohead fanned out through the museum, clumps of fans in "Kid A" T-shirts followed at a respectful distance. The group slowly disintegrated, and Maria gave up. At the exit, she said sternly, "Not once this entire time have you all been together." Yorke smiled sympathetically and replied, "Not the first time, won't be the last."

The same day, the band had a meal at a restaurant called Etxebarri, in the hills above Bilbao. The conversation was an intelligent blur, jumping from high to low and back again. On one side of the table, Jonny was talking about twentieth-century classical music. "I've been listening to a CD of Berg's 'Lulu' Suite," he said, picking at a plate of lettuce. "I'm killing myself because I forgot to bring my Messiaen." Jonny is fascinated by Olivier Messiaen, the late French composer; it is because of Messiaen that he became interested in the ondes martenot, which is featured in many of the composer's works. "I heard the 'Turan-galila Symphony' when I was fifteen," Jonny went on, "and I became round-the-bend obsessed with it. I wish I could have met him or shaken his hand. I did get to meet his sister-in-law, the ondeste Jeanne Lloriod. I'm learning Messiaen's 'Trois Petites Liturgies' for a performance in London." Jonny also mentioned a meeting with Esa-Pekka Salonen, the music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, who wants Radiohead to write a work for him.

On the other side of the table, Yorke, whose meal consisted of a bowl of bean soup, started complaining about pop-music conglomerates. He and the rest of the band have become politically outspoken, protesting globalization and corporate capitalism. The previous night, he had dedicated "No Surprises"—which contains the lines "Bring down the government / They don't speak



"Hey, Doug! Great party!"

for us”—to George W. Bush. This summer, Radiohead have chosen to play a number of open-air venues—such as Liberty State Park, in Jersey City, where they are appearing on August 16th and 17th—because these sites have so far escaped the tentacles of an aggressive promotion company called S.F.X., whose parent corporation, Clear Channel, also operates more than a thousand radio stations.

“S.F.X. is a parasite that needs a host to feed on,” Yorke said.

“It’s effective only as long as it keeps growing,” O’Brien added. “At some point, it will cease growing, and then its reason to exist will disappear.”

“No,” Yorke said, “it’s a virus that’s just going to keep spreading forever.”

Chris Hufford, one of the band’s managers, who has to negotiate with viruses on the phone, grew impatient. “This is reality, Thom,” he said. “This is the marketplace we’re in.”

“No,” Yorke replied, “the marketplace is where we sell records. This isn’t the marketplace. It’s an area of, I don’t know, oversight.”

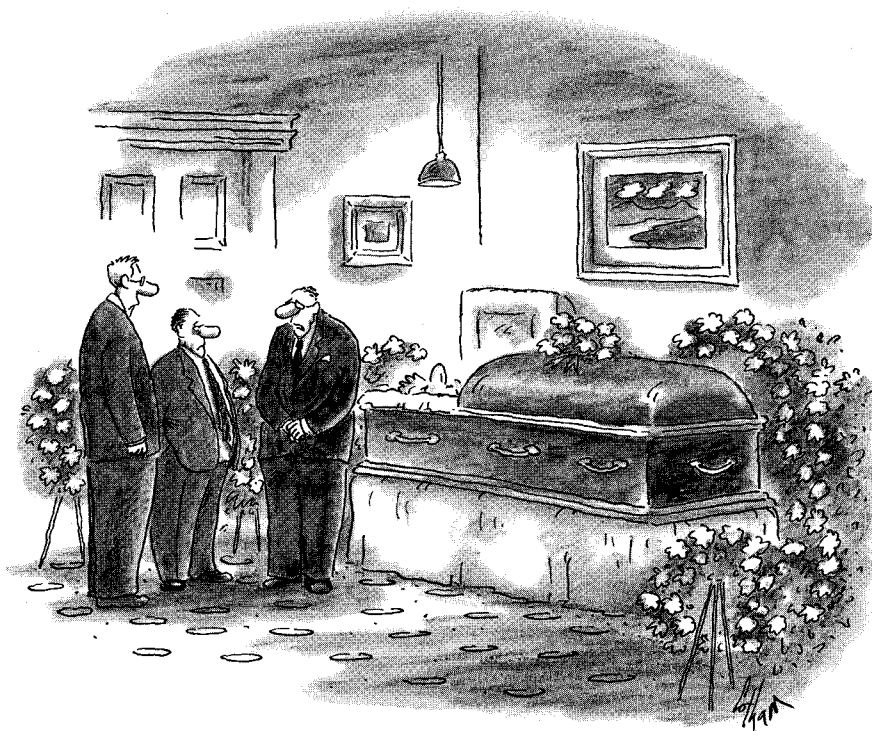
“Come on,” Hufford said, “it’s capitalism, it’s what we have to work with.”

“Bollocks!”

“Capitalism!”

“*Bollocks!*” Yorke yelled. He got up in a mock huff to go to the bathroom. Colin looked up from his steak and gestured toward the wine in the middle of the table. “Brilliant!” he exclaimed. “Booze in the afternoon!”

That night, Radiohead got on a bus to go to their next gig, in the French village of Vaison-la-Romaine. They played a show at a magnificent Roman amphitheatre there, and then went to Verona, in Italy, where they performed for a crowd of fifteen thousand in the legendary Arena, displacing scenery for “Aida” onto the piazza. Along the way, they made on-the-fly recordings with Nigel Godrich, their young, wizardly producer, on assorted Apple PowerBooks; appeared on a popular BBC radio show called “Mark & Lard,” where they were required to shout the phrase “Biggity-biggity-bong!”; greeted a radio-contest winner who hailed Yorke as “a genius” and “sincere”; and avoided some overzealous fans who hollered, “We have come all the way from Venezuela, give us your autograph!”



“I promised her I wouldn’t talk sports at least until the reception.”

even though they had French accents and were not from Venezuela. There were also quiet moments here and there, as when they sat in a hotel lobby reading the English papers, sun streaming on the marble, and seemed to be fulfilling Colin’s notion of the band as “the E. M. Förster of rock.”

Radiohead began at Abingdon School, a boys’ school outside Oxford. Abingdon has a history dating back to the twelfth century, but it is not an elite bastion on the order of Eton or Winchester. Its students tend to come from the Thames Valley region, rather than from all over England, and many rely on scholarships. The members of Radiohead were born into ordinary middle-class families: Yorke’s father was a chemical-equipment supplier; Jonny and Colin’s father served in the Army. They were, basically, townies—the kids on the other side of the ancient walls. Even at Abingdon, they felt out of place. The headmaster of the school, Michael St. John Parker, cultivated a pompous manner that many alumni—not just Radiohead—remember less than fondly. Parker is still in charge, and has described the school spirit in

these terms: “Competition is promoted, achievement is applauded, and individual dynamism is encouraged.”

In schools of this kind, many students gravitate to the art, music, and drama departments, where the sense of discipline is looser. For Radiohead, the saving grace of Abingdon was an exceptional teacher named Terence Gilmore-James, who headed the music program. “I was a sort of leper at the time,” Yorke recalled, “and he was the only one who was nice to me.” Yorke was born with his left eye paralyzed; in his childhood, he endured a series of not entirely successful operations to correct it, and the oddity of his half-open eye made him a target for bullies. Tougher than he looked, he often fought back, but he preferred to disappear. “School was bearable for me because the music department was separate from the rest of the school,” he said. “It had pianos in tiny booths, and I used to spend a lot of time hanging around there after school, waiting for my dad to come home from work.” Other members of the band also studied with Gilmore-James and were encouraged by him. “When we started, it was very important that we got support from him,” Colin said, “because we

weren't getting any from the headmaster. You know, the man once sent us a bill, charging us for the use of school property, because we practiced in one of the music rooms on a Sunday."

The yen for freedom in Radiohead's sound owes a lot to Gilmore-James, who immersed his students in twentieth-century classical music, avant-garde music of the postwar era, classic jazz, and film scores. Once, he had the school orchestra perform Richard Rodney Bennett's score for "Murder on the Orient Express" while the film was playing. He left Abingdon in 1987 to devote himself to the legacy of his father-in-law, the Welsh composer Mansel Thomas, whose music he is editing for publication. "I watch over Radiohead much as I watch over my children," he said in a phone call. He spoke with the fastidiousness of a lifelong teacher, and yet his tone was enthusiastic rather than dogmatic. "They were all of them talented boys, in the sense that they had more than average abilities to think for themselves. I was of a different generation, and I did not always grasp what they were after, but I knew that they were serious. And they were delightful to be around, always getting carried away by their latest discoveries. Whenever I see them"—his voice became firm—"I tell them that they *must* continue to pursue their own original line."

In the schoolboy cadre of Radiohead, Yorke was the bossy one from the start. His very first words to Selway at rehearsal were "Can't you play any fucking faster?" The band's early songs were all over the map, sounding variously like the Smiths, R. E. M., Sonic Youth, and the Talking Heads, whose song "Radio Head" gave the group its name. (At first, they performed under the name On a Friday, but they wisely changed their minds.) The strongest influence came from the Pixies, the incontestably great but never world-famous Boston band whose gritty, brainy songs, shaded soft and loud, also inspired Nirvana. Even as the boys wandered off to university, they got together over weekends, practicing, arguing, and searching for a style. In 1991, Hufford, the co-owner of an Oxford sound studio, came to hear them play, at a place called the Jericho Tavern, and was mesmerized by Yorke's dire energy onstage. He and his partner

Bryce Edge produced a demo tape and signed on as managers. Colin, who was working at a record store, gave the tape to Keith Wozencroft, a sales rep for EMI, who moved to A. & R. shortly afterward and began to tout the band. They signed with EMI later that year.

"I was getting ready to quit EMI when these lads appeared," Carol Baxter, Radiohead's international record-company representative, recalled. "Bunch of disturbed consumptives, I thought. But they were ambitious and smart. At first, I had to hide my Radiohead paperwork behind the Tina Turner and Queensrÿche files, because my boss thought I was wasting my time. Then the call came in, from Israel, actually, saying that the band had a hit." Tim Greaves, Radiohead's longtime tour manager, commented on the band's overnight success. "The funny thing about Radiohead early on was that they were more famous abroad than in England," he said. "They'd go around in a van, playing in sweaty little clubs. Then they'd go to Israel and they were rock stars. Same in America. Then it was back to England, back to the van, back to the clubs. They had a good early introduction to the relativity of fame. Fame for this band is a holiday that lasts a few weeks."

Radiohead's ticket to fame was a song called "Creep." It became a worldwide hit in 1993, when grunge rock was at its height. The lyrics spelled out the self-lacerating rage of an unsuccessful crush: "You're so fucking special / I wish I was special / But I'm a creep." The music was modelled on Pixies songs like "Where Is My Mind?": stately arpeggios, then an electric squall. What set "Creep" apart from the grunge of the early nineties was the grandeur of its chords—in particular, its regal turn from G major to B major. No matter how many times you hear the song, the second chord still sails beautifully out of the blue. The lyrics may be saying, "I'm a creep," but the music is saying, "I am majestic." The sense of coiled power is increased by several horrible stabs of noise on Jonny Greenwood's guitar. Radiohead have stopped playing "Creep," more or less, but it still hits home when it comes on the radio. When Beavis of "Beavis and Butt-head" heard the noisy part, he said, "Rock!" But why, he wondered, didn't the song rock

from beginning to end? "If they didn't have, like, a part of the song that sucked, then, it's like, the other part wouldn't be as cool," Butt-head explained.

"Creep," as Butt-head must have noticed, was the first of many Radiohead songs that used pivot tones, in which one note of a chord is held until a new chord is formed around it. (In the turn from G to B, the note B is the pivot point.) "Yeah, that's my only trick," Yorke said, when this was pointed out to him. "I've got one trick and that's it, and I'm really going to have to learn a new one. Pedals, banging away through everything." But a reliance on pedal tones and pivot tones isn't necessarily a limitation: the Romantic composers worked to death the idea that any chord could turn on a dime toward another. Yorke's "pedals" help give Radiohead songs a bitter-sweet, doomy taste. ("Airbag," for example, being in A major, ought to be a bright thing, but the intrusion of F and C tones tilts the music toward the minor mode. "Morning Bell" sways darkly between A minor and C-sharp minor.) It's a looser, roomier kind of harmony than the standard I-IV-V-I, and it gives the songs a distinct personality. It also helps sell records: whether playing guitar rock or sampling spaced-out electronica, Radiohead affix their signature.

Through the years, many bands have thrown bits and pieces of jazz and classical into their mix. The Beatles were by far the best at this kind of genre assimilation. Lesser psychedelic and prog-rock bands turned orchestral crescendos and jazz freak-outs into another brand of kitsch. But Radiohead's classical complexity isn't pasted on the surface; it's planted at the core. If you did a breakdown of the music, you'd find the same harmonic DNA everywhere. Another trademark is the band's use of musical space. Riffs are always switching registers, bouncing from treble to bass, breaking through the ceiling or falling through the floor. In "Just," from "The Bends," the Greenwood brothers play octatonic scales that sprawl over four octaves; the effect is of music looming miles above you.

There are times when Radiohead seem to be practicing a new kind of classical music for the masses. In the sessions for "Kid A" and "Amnesiac," which began in 1999 and dragged on for a year

SKETCHBOOK BY R. CRUMB

WEEMS STRING BAND



BACK BEFORE MANUFACTURED POP MUSIC WAS SHOVED DOWN OUR THROATS, WE HAD A DIFFERENT KIND OF MUSICAL ENVIRONMENT. OUR ANCESTORS LIKED TO DANCE, AND THERE WERE PLENTY OF MUSICIANS TO PROVIDE THE MUSIC. THESE MUSICIANS LEARNED TUNES FROM THEIR SURROUNDINGS — RELATIVES, WANDERING MINSTRELS, LOCAL PLAYERS OF RENOWN. THE WEEMS STRING BAND, FROM WESTERN TENNESSEE, WAS A FAMILY ORCHESTRA WHOSE ONE 78-R.P.M. RECORD, "DAVY/GREENBACK DOLLAR," IS A MAGNIFICENT EXAMPLE OF THIS LOST MUSIC.



*"Pretty woman, gettin' on the lift.
Pretty woman, seems like she's kinda miffed."*

and a half, their sound became bewitchingly intricate. On "Pyramid Song," for example, a string section played glissando harmonics, a texture that Stravinsky's "Firebird" made famous, while Selway laid on a shuffling rhythm that defies description, because, as he said, "there is no time signature." On "Dollars & Cents," O'Brien used a pedal to bend a chord from major to minor and back again. For "Like Spinning Plates," Yorke learned the vocal line of an unused song backward and made up new words while driving around in his car. The guitarists set aside their instruments for a while and taught themselves to use heaps of electronic equipment. In "Treefingers," on "Kid A," O'Brien generated

something that sounded a lot like Jonny's beloved Messiaen. Both albums were also heavily influenced by jazz, especially by Mingus, Alice Coltrane, and Miles Davis in his fusion phase.

Behind this creative frenzy, however, was an ongoing debate about the direction of the band. The five of them often have to thrash out issues among themselves: how to balance tours with family life; how to keep the media at bay; how, simply, to get along. In this case, Yorke was fed up with the kind of verse-and-chorus music Radiohead had made throughout the nineties, and not everyone else agreed. O'Brien, in particular, thought that the band should return to the kind of classic guitar rock that by the

end of the decade had become an endangered species. "There was a lot of arguing," Nigel Godrich recalled. "People stopped talking to one another. 'Insanity' is the word. In the end, I think the debate was redundant, because the band ultimately kept doing what it has always done—zigzagging between extremes. Whenever we really did try to impose an aesthetic from the outside—the aesthetic being, say, electronic—it would fail. All the drama was just a form of procrastination. Next time, three weeks, and we're out."

Radiohead may change direction once again. Several songs on "Amnesiac" stand out for their straight-ahead pop appeal. "I Might Be Wrong" is all snarling guitars; "Knives Out" goes back to the clean-cut heartbreak of the Smiths. The ominously beautiful "Pyramid Song" could almost be a variation on "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot":

I jumped in the river, what did I see?
Black-eyed angels swam with me. . . .
We all went to heaven in a little rowboat
There was nothing to fear and nothing to doubt.

This is very much Yorke's song, and it sounds best when he performs it alone, on an upright piano. You notice that he sings from the chest, breathing through his phrases. You also notice the plain mystery of his piano chords. Laced with suspended tones, they hang mysteriously in the air, somewhere between serenity and sadness. "I bought a piano after 'OK Computer,' at a time when picking up a guitar just didn't do anything for me at all," he says. "I bought a really flashy piano that I couldn't play at all. In true rock-star style." In fact, he gets a warm, mellow tone out of the piano, caressing rather than pounding the keys. He keeps his wrists high, as if Terence Gilmore-James were looking over his shoulder.

Yorke is the essential spark of the Radiohead phenomenon. Like all greatly gifted people, he is not always easy to be around. When a stranger approaches him, wanting unscheduled attention, he can be unsettlingly mute. He is, by his own admission, temperamental and chronically dissatisfied. But his fault-finding circles back to the music, which is why the other band members go along with it. When he is happy, it feels like history

in the making. Curled up on a dressing-room sofa after a show, he comes across as warm, alert, and faintly mischievous. "It's nice when people talk to you as if you're a human being, rather than as if you'd just landed from another planet," he said. "We're fallible, this is fallible, sometimes we're shit, sometimes we're not. We want to kind of mellow it all out a bit. Just chill the fuck out." He grinned quickly, perhaps realizing that the last phrase was a contradiction in terms.

At the beginning of June, "Amnesiac" went on sale in the United States. There was mild Radiohead mania all over New York. The core audience was represented by Helen Weng, an eighteen-year-old from Long Island, who waited at the Virgin Megastore with her friend Melissa Torres to buy "Amnesiac" at a midnight sale. In her bag, she carried a letter from Thom Yorke, written in his own hand, with advice on how to make yourself happy. "It's good to know someone else has had the same feelings," she said, clutching the paper. Over at Fez, Justin Bond, the cross-dressing star of the scathingly brilliant cabaret duo Kiki & Herb, sang "Life in a Glasshouse," from "Amnesiac," even though the record was not yet in the stores. He attributed it to "Rodeohead, a very exciting young English rock ensemble," and rendered it as a demented torch song, which it already mostly was.

Radiohead's appeal to a cross-section of the American public defies the untranslatability of English pop. Steve Martin, a publicist for the band, explained it this way: "Americans don't go for 'cheeky.' We like earnest." Radiohead may be cagey, but they are never cheeky, and they are massively earnest. They have worked hard in America, logging time in the middle of the country as well as on the coasts. They are noted in the music business for being polite and unproblematic. A French hotel reservation of theirs extravagantly requested, "Extra towels." One hotel doorman described them as "nice, sharp-witted, entertaining young men. Not trash-headed and stupored, as you might expect." Despite the fatigue of their last big tours, in 1997 and 1998, they were game for America this summer.

"Sure, the last tour was bloody awful," Ed O'Brien said, "but that was where we

were at mentally, not a reaction to America. This place is just too huge to generalize about. When I was in college, I took six months off to ride around in Greyhound buses, and I got a sense of it." He was excited about playing at Red Rocks Amphitheatre, in the foothills of the Rockies. "Basically, we've had a fantasy scenario of reenacting U2 live at Red Rocks," he said. "We watched the video a million times when we were kids and know every frame. 'This song is not a rebel song!'" He lifted his fist and let out a soft roar. Fans who worry that Radiohead are losing touch with rock and roll can always look to this man, who enjoys the role of the guitar hero, even if he also sometimes kneels down in front of his samplers and molds the music into a smear of color.

Radiohead checked into a Denver hotel on June 19th. Fans descended on Red Rocks the following morning, squatting on a half-mile flight of steps that leads to the arena. Down at the bottom was a group of college students, from Pepperdine and the University of Colorado at Boulder. Their names were Elke Goldstein, Amber Hollingsworth, Matt Duffy, and Kendall Lux. "Radiohead is music for miserable people who were dropped on the floor when they were little," Amber explained. "I don't know about that," Elke said. "I mean, that's the reputation, but are we miser-

able?" Munching on carrots, they did not look miserable.

Matt delivered a critique of the band, speaking rapidly, as if from memory. "Thom is suffering from Bono syndrome," he said. "Getting political. What's he doing hanging out with Bono? What's Bono doing hanging out with presidents and the Pope? He's a rock singer, damn it! Here's the difference between U2 and Radiohead: U2 says, 'The world sucks, and we have to change it,' whereas Radiohead says, 'The world sucks and not much can be done about it. The world is lame, ridiculous.'" Elke rolled her eyes. "May-be," she said. Matt barreled on: "Their records are put out by EMI, a multinational conglomerate, so it's hard to see how they can attack capitalism from that position. 'Kid A' and 'Amnesiac'? Ambient blueprints for music we haven't quite heard yet. Thom listens to Brian Eno, Aphex Twin, the whole Warp Records back catalogue. 'Packt Like Sardines'—what's that, one pattern stuck in a groove? But when they play it we're all going to go, 'Yeah!' No one can really say why they like them. Yet here we are."

In a matter of minutes, Matt had summed up everything that has been written about Radiohead in the past few years. Rock critics, like adolescent fans, have feisty friendships with the bands they admire, lacing hero worship with



"Can you keep a huge secret? I was guilty."

contempt. It's one thing to hear this from a college student; it's another to read it in cold print, in all its meandering incoherence. If some magazines didn't use rating systems, you would have no idea what the reviewers thought. The magazine *Q*, for example, gave "Amnesiac" four stars and then called it "numb, petty, desolate." *Spin* wrote, "They're just trying to get home in one piece, life is but a dream. Fa fa fa. Blip blip." Rating: 7 out of 10. Some of the criticism has been peculiarly personal, especially in England. *Melody Maker* once said that Yorke was "marked for destruction" and suggested that he might end up killing himself, like Kurt Cobain. As a result, the singer has developed an aversion to English rock writers, and they, in turn, have goaded him at every turn. Ill feelings all around have led to unrecognizable profiles in which the band seems to be composed of curmudgeons.

At Red Rocks, Radiohead agreed to sit down for a rare collective interview with a journalist. A brave young MTV correspondent named Gideon Yago showed up to interrogate them. A Queens native who started working at MTV at the age of twenty-one, Yago has loved Radiohead since his teens. He had a sheaf of notes on his clipboard, including a chart of the band members' personalities. O'Brien and Selway struck him as "the sensible ones"; the Green-

wood brothers he pegged as "will eat you alive." He wasn't sure what to make of Yorke. His impressions were based largely on a Radiohead tour documentary, "Meeting People Is Easy," which came out in 1998. This unpleasant film was a kind of counterstrike against the music press, recording scores of pointless interviews with dead-tired members of the band. During one of them, Colin seemed ready to lapse into a coma. "I don't want to be just another dolt with a microphone," Yago said. "Like the guy in the movie who asks Thom if he got to talk to Calvin Klein."

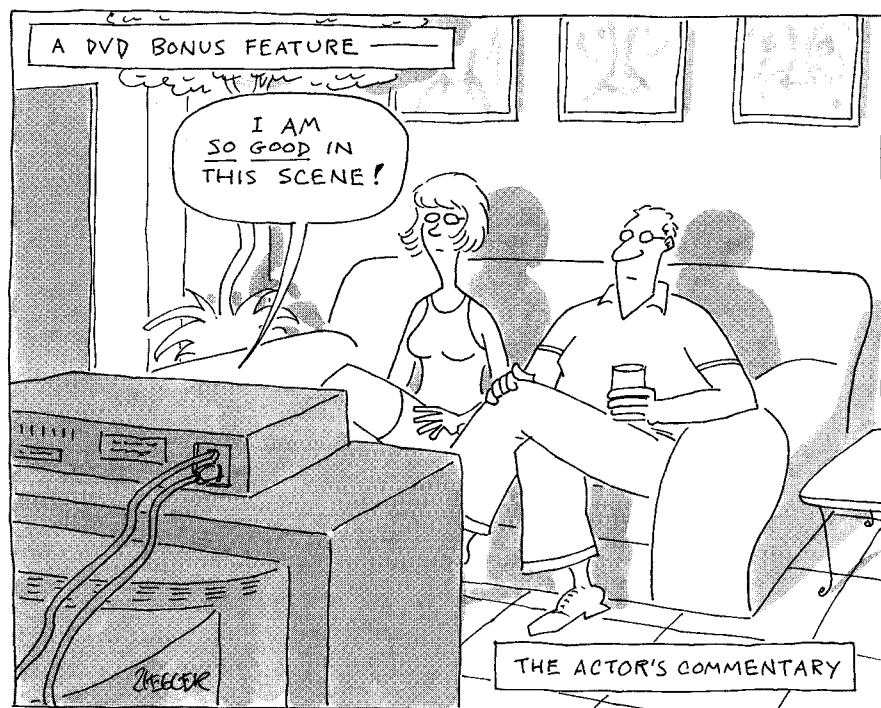
Yago knew a lot about music and a lot about Radiohead, but when the cameras rolled he elected to keep much of his knowledge hidden. "Remember," his producer, Liane Su, told him, "you're not an expert, you're just a fan." The fans wanted to know whether the band thought it was experimenting too much, why "Kid A" and "Amnesiac" hadn't been released as a double album, what all the songs on "Amnesiac" meant. Radiohead did snap at Yago once or twice, as when he characterized "Amnesiac" as "a collection of outtakes from the 'Kid A' sessions," and Selway shot back, "Try again!" But the mood was relaxed, for the most part. Yago got them all to laugh when he introduced a question from a so-called "Stanley from Coney Island," which read, "How do you guys

feel about the fact that bands like Travis, Coldplay, and Muse are making a career sounding exactly like your records did in 1997?" Yorke cupped his hand around his mouth and called out, "Good luck with 'Kid A!'" When the interview was over, Yago looked shell-shocked but relieved. "That was relatively painless," the journalist said, gulping down a Molson.

Last month, Radiohead returned home to play in South Park, a broad meadow outside the center of Oxford. It was a drizzly day, and the towers of the university were gray lumps in the distance. The event was a kind of mini-festival, mostly given over to performances by bands that Radiohead admired. Like other summer festivals, it had kebab stands, beer huts, and T-shirt booths. Forty-four thousand fans, mostly in their teens and twenties, sat on the lawn. After a few hours, the grass was carpeted with plastic-foam cups, each one displaying the "Amnesiac" logo. To an outsider, it might have seemed like just another messy rock show.

It wasn't. At about four o' clock, Humphrey Lyttelton, the eighty-year-old jazz trumpeter, appeared onstage. After a few words of introduction, he and his band launched into a deft set of Armstrong and Ellington numbers. A guy in a "Blur: Are Shite" T-shirt shouted, "You're great!" Next up was Sigur Rós, a group of Icelandic musicians, who play a kind of mystic-minimalist rock that builds to climaxes over five- and ten-minute spans. In the half-mile-long line of people who were shuffling toward the "Alcoholic Fresh Juices" stand, every other face was lost in wonder at the gentle power of the chords. South Park had been overtaken by the Radiohead ethic—a love of far-flung sounds, a knack for sinuous juxtapositions, a faith in the audience's ability to take it all in.

Something about Radiohead inspires a disorienting kind of hope. Unlike so many professional cynics in the business, these musicians believe that their art can go still higher. They have promoted dozens of lesser-known, musically inventive acts, including Autechre, the Beta Band, Clinic, Kid Koala, Lali Puna, Low, Sparklehorse, and, of course, Christoph de Babalon. They have also



DELIVERIES ONLY

(For Sarah Marjorie Lyon, born in a service elevator)

Your whole life long, you'll dine
out on the same questions:
In your building? On what floor?
Was it going up or down?

They'll need the precise location—
Seventy-ninth and Lex?—
as if learning it could shield them
from the consequences of sex.

Wasn't your mother a doctor?
Didn't she talk him through
how to do it? And then you'll tell them
how your father delivered you,

that only after your birth
did he think to reach in her bag
and dial 911.
He held you up like a phone

and was taught how to cut the cord.
What about proper hygiene?
When did the ambulance come?
Waiting, you were the siren,

squalling in a rage
behind the old-fashioned mesh
of the elevator door:
a Lyon cub in her cage.

Didn't your parents worry?
Hadn't they done Lamaze?
But you'll only shrug at your story:
That was the way it was.

—Mary Jo Salter

boosted favorite authors, helping to sell thousands of copies of Naomi Klein's anti-globalization screed "No Logo." The artists who appear on this roster have little or nothing in common, and that is what they have in common: they are a funky clamor of voices, not a line of products. Such guerrilla marketing is, in the end, a form of politics—a protest against the growing sameness of the cultural landscape. The sheer cussedness of the enterprise is amazing to behold. The loudest protest comes in Radiohead's own songs, which, next to the white noise of prefab pop, sound

like the music of a hidden world, hymns from a sunken cathedral.

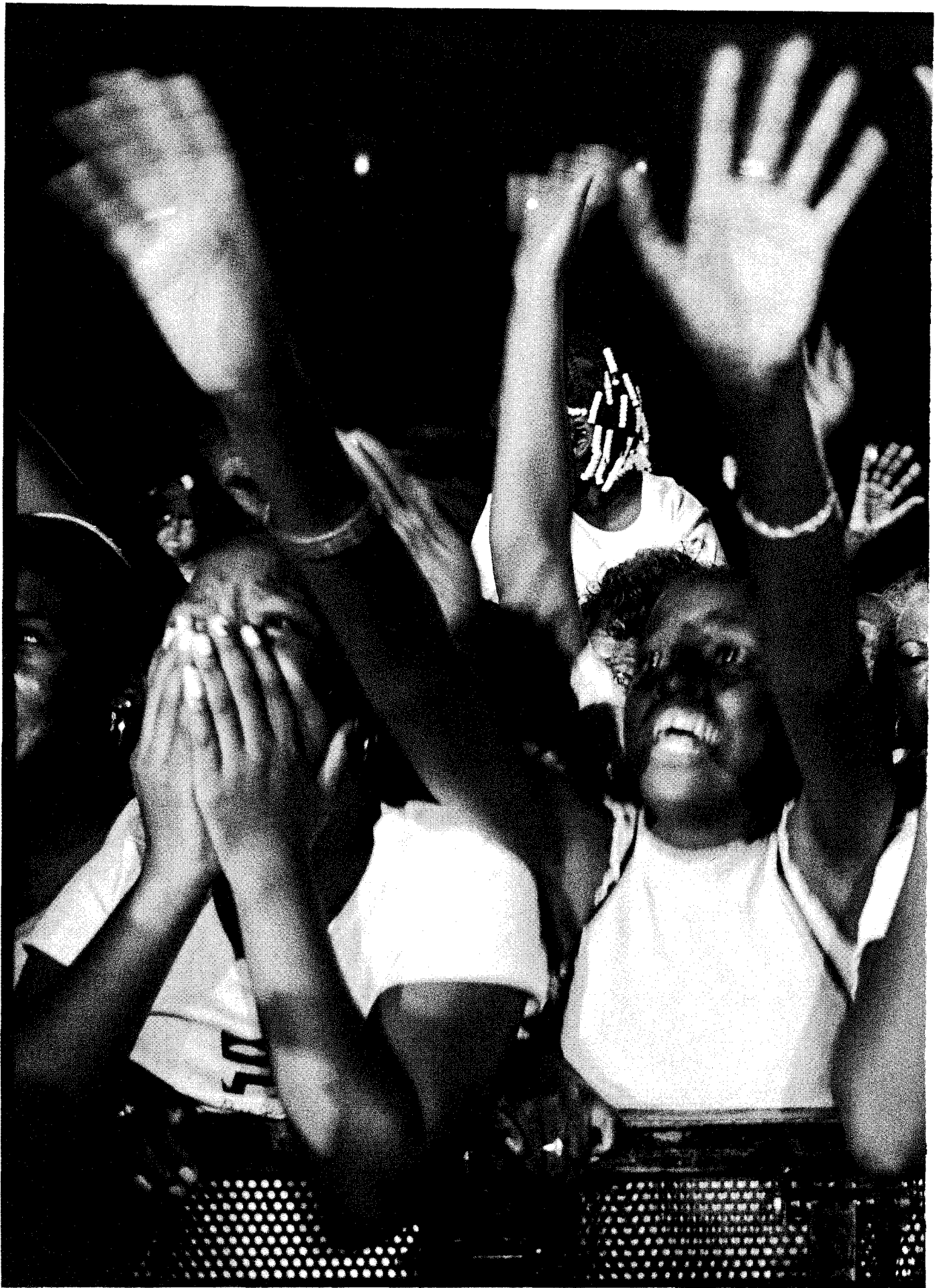
"Lots of really talented artists are being thrown by the wayside," Yorke had said during the American tour. "They are not being given the time of day, because they're not doing things that fit the moment. Madmen with machetes are chopping away at the wood—any wood, deadwood, doesn't matter. You want to slap people and say, 'Why don't you go back and look at all the beautiful things that have been made in the music business and realize that you have to have faith in people?' In the long run, the in-

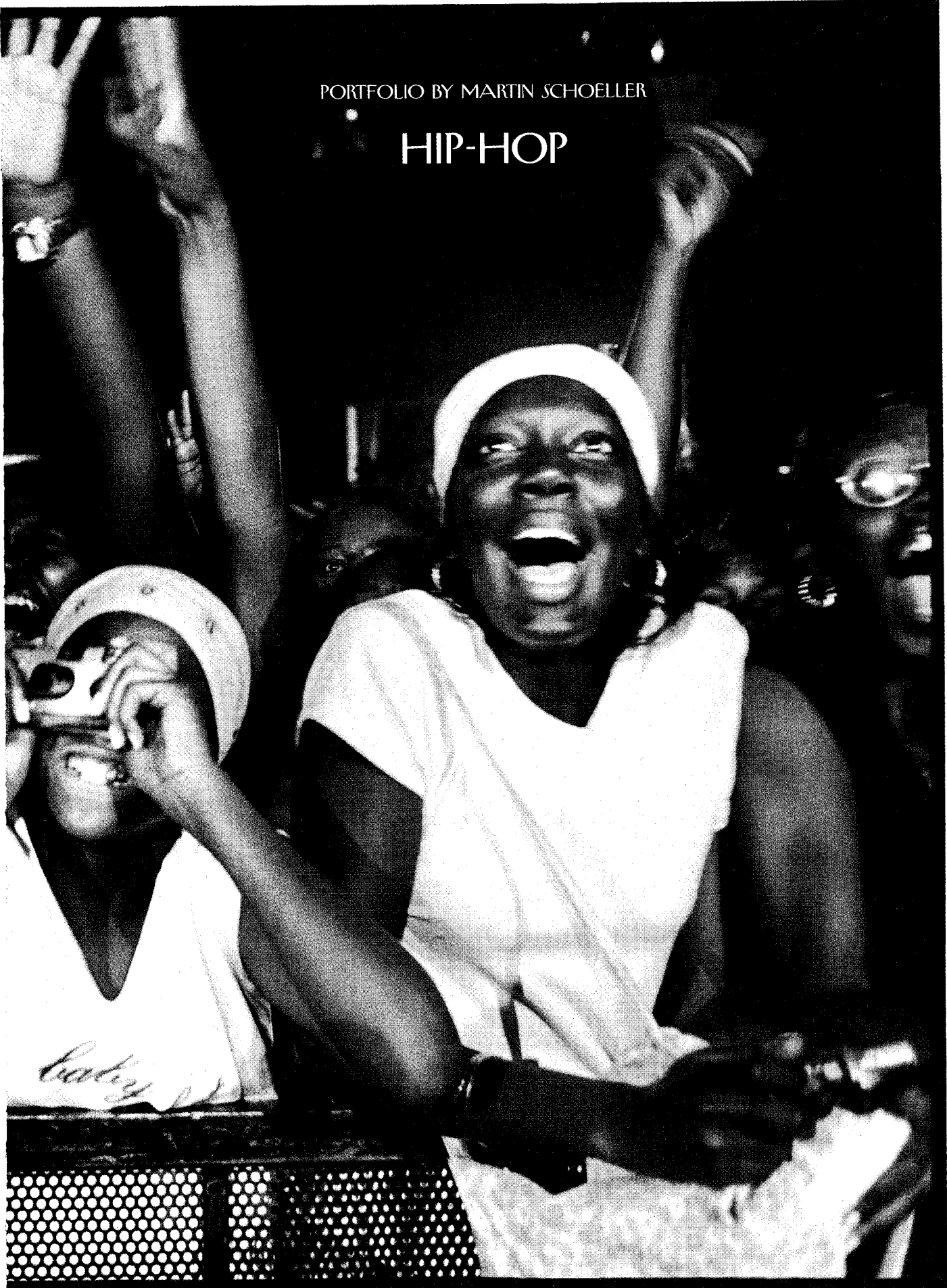
dustry wants to make money, but if a company wants to make money then it has to take a risk. These people don't take risks. They make quick money and then that's it. And the world isn't a nicer place for it. What really makes me fucking spit blood is when people in the industry start complaining about how there's no talent around. I know it's there and you know it's there. But you are too shit scared to do anything about it."

Radiohead came onto the South Park stage at eight-thirty. It was not the most flawless show of the past few weeks, but it may have been the most intense. Yorke's voice glowed with emotion. If Terence Gilmore-James had been there, he would have been happy; you could hear how Radiohead's storm of sound was centered on a singing line. During "How to Disappear Completely," a drenching rain began to fall. The crowd, religiously attentive, stayed in place. Yorke appeared alone for the last number, and hit a few plangent chords. His instrument went dead. "*Es ist kaputt, ja?*" he said. "I have another idea." The others came back onstage, and together they launched into the familiar strains of "Creep," which had gone unplayed since 1998. G major wheeled majestically into B. Jonny made his Beavis-and-Butt-head noise. Yorke sang, "What the hell am I doing here?"

Afterward, in the dressing room, Yorke looked happy. "Don't know if you could tell," he said to Colin's wife, Molly, "but I was in tears for the last part of it." Then the perfectionist in him reawakened. "Horrible diesel smell coming from somewhere," he said.

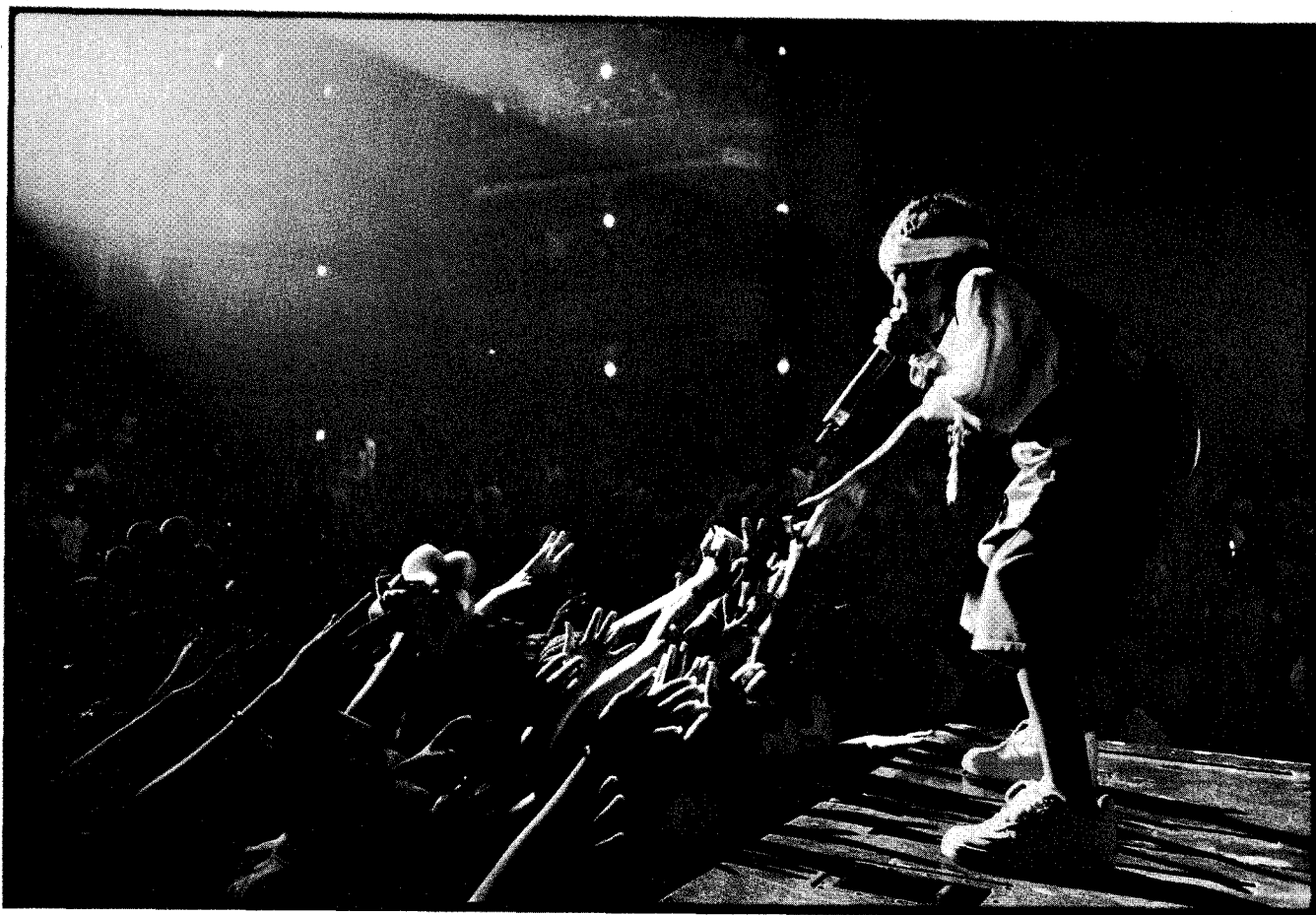
The next day, Colin invited some friends over for brunch. He and Molly live in a semidetached house on an Oxford side street. This was the beginning of a three-week holiday for the band, and Colin faced the prospect of having nothing to do. "We might go to a movie," he said, as if he were going to the moon. He picked through some LPs and CDs, putting on Brad Mehldau. When someone asked him if he had got a sense of the crowd at South Park—it may have been the largest public gathering in the thousand-year history of Oxford—he rubbed his eyes and smiled. "Fraid not," he replied. "I was too busy looking at Phil's calves. That's where the beats are." ♦





PORTFOLIO BY MARTIN SCHOELLER

HIP-HOP



At first, hip-hop was a New York phenomenon, and rappers bragged about what borough they were from—the members of Run DMC famously called themselves “Kings from Queens.” Then Los Angeles emerged as rap’s second city, and a bicoastal feud began. Hip-hop is now a quarter of a century old, give or take a few years, and the phenomenon has gone national, with an increasing number of regional approaches.

Last year’s most popular new hip-hop star was a St. Louis native named Nelly, and other new rappers, like Petey Pablo, from North Carolina, are hoping that their exotic area codes will help them make it—Petey Pablo recently recorded a song called “919.” A rapper’s most important instrument is language, and the

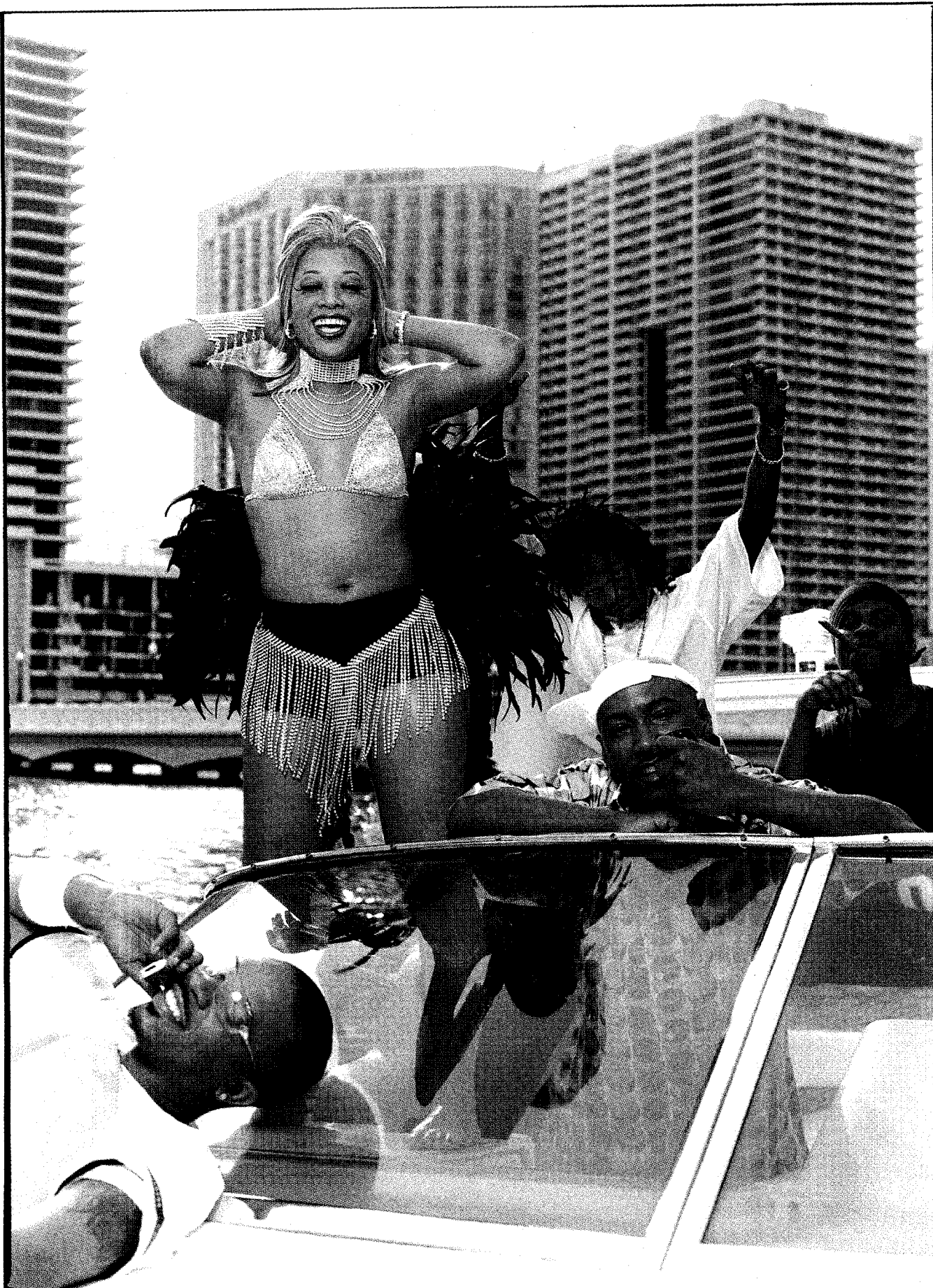
diversity of American dialects has fostered a corresponding diversity of styles: OutKast’s eclectic, rock-influenced albums have sparked a hip-hop explosion in Atlanta, while Snoop Dogg’s falsetto remains the singular voice of Los Angeles, and Dirty, a group from Montgomery, Alabama, turns Southern drawl into fast, slick rhymes. In this new era, rappers have become vociferous civic boosters, and it’s hard to imagine that, only a few years ago, their lyrics were taken as proof that black America was a stifling place.

Not every city has been successful, of course. Houston and Philadelphia have produced long lists of rap greats, but Dallas and Boston are still waiting. Sometimes the path of diversity is sur-

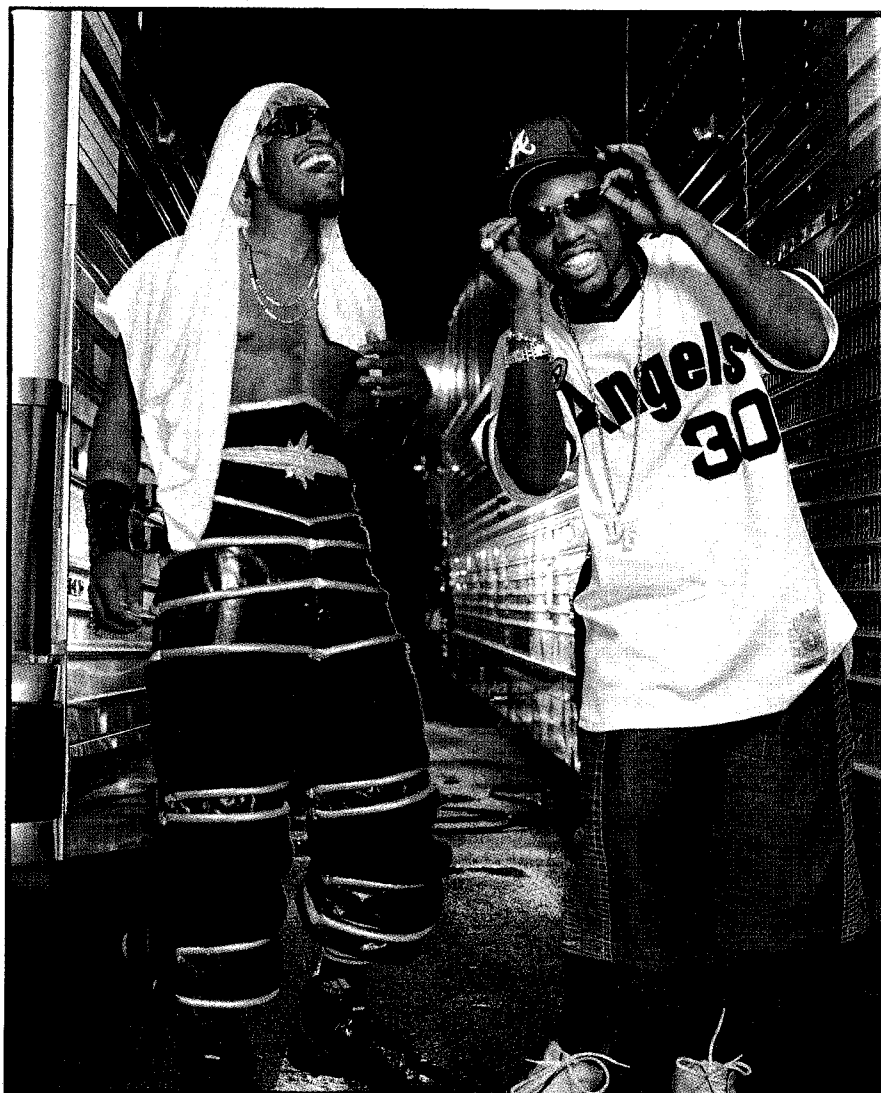
prising. Detroit, which has one of the country’s largest black populations, has produced only two rap stars, both white: Eminem and Kid Rock.

New York remains hip-hop’s capital. It is the home of the industry’s major labels and magazines, and of many of its most recognizable voices, from Kurtis Blow to Lil’ Kim. But rap’s decentralization has forced New York to acknowledge the rest of the country. These days, it’s not unusual to find a local rapper using the word “crunk” (Southern slang for “wild”), or imitating a California dance style called the Crip Walk, or collaborating with a rapper from a city that doesn’t have a professional baseball team or a subway system.

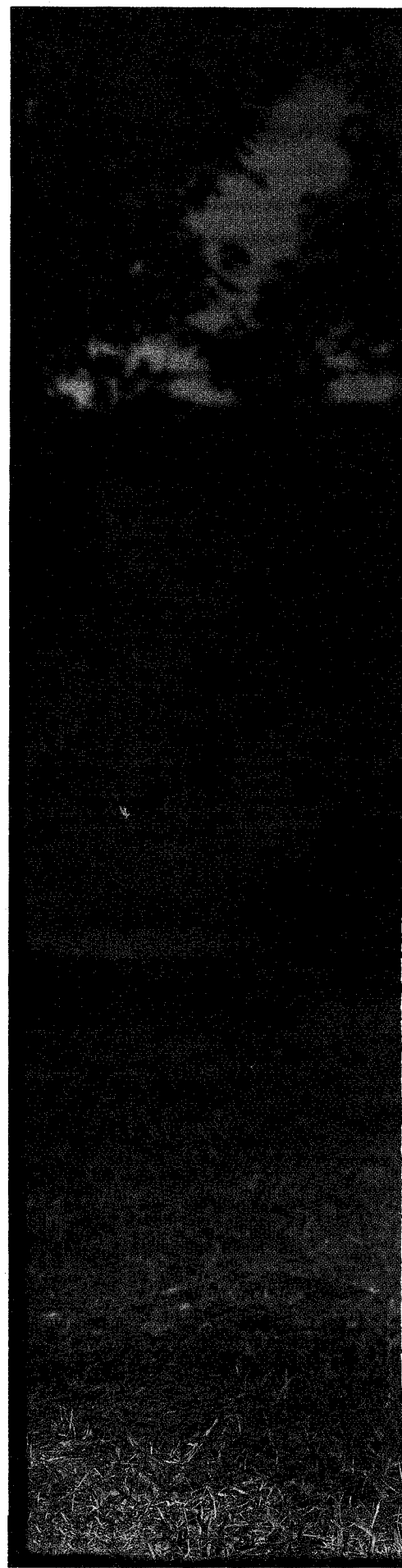
—Kelefa Sanneh

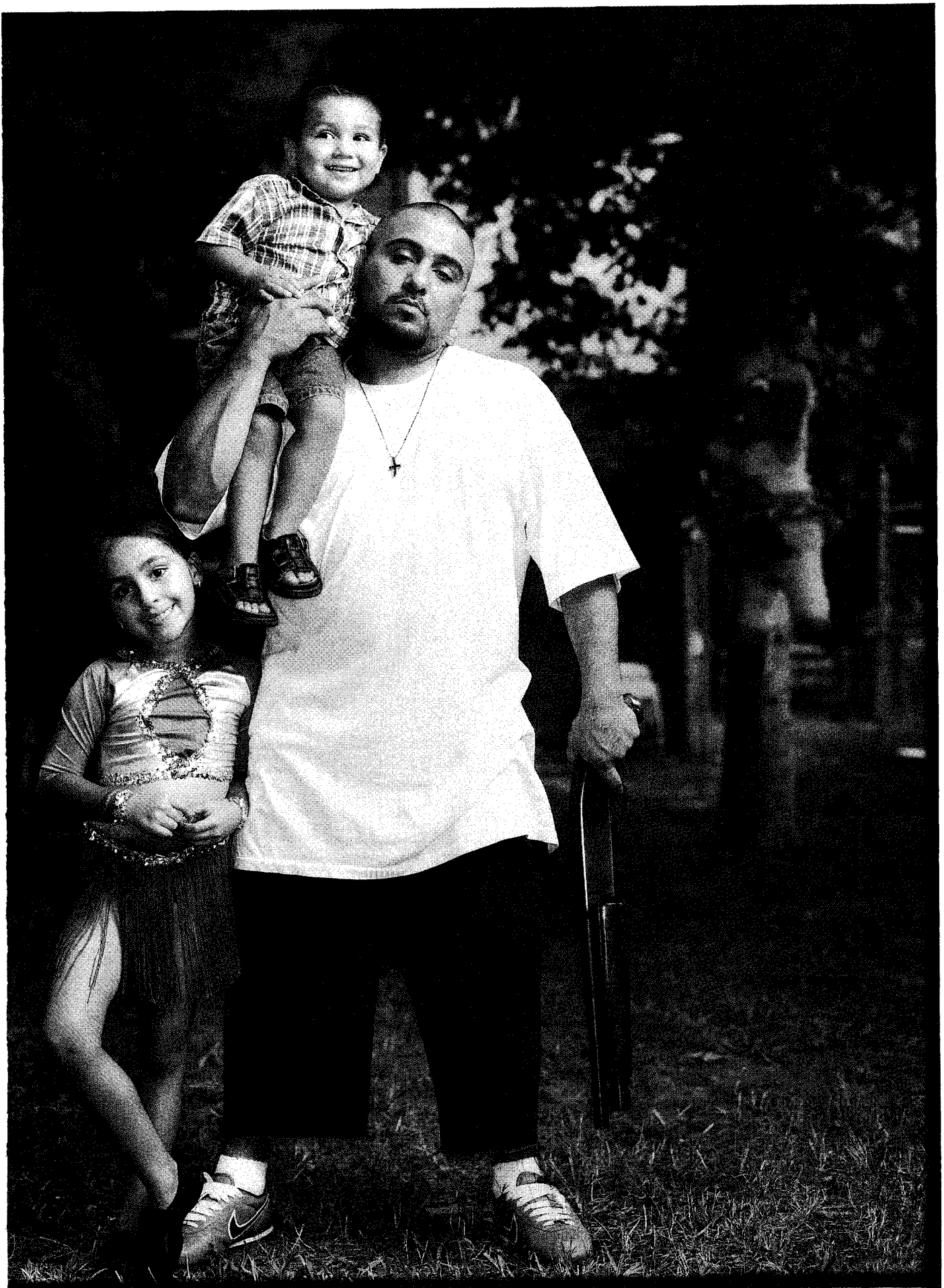


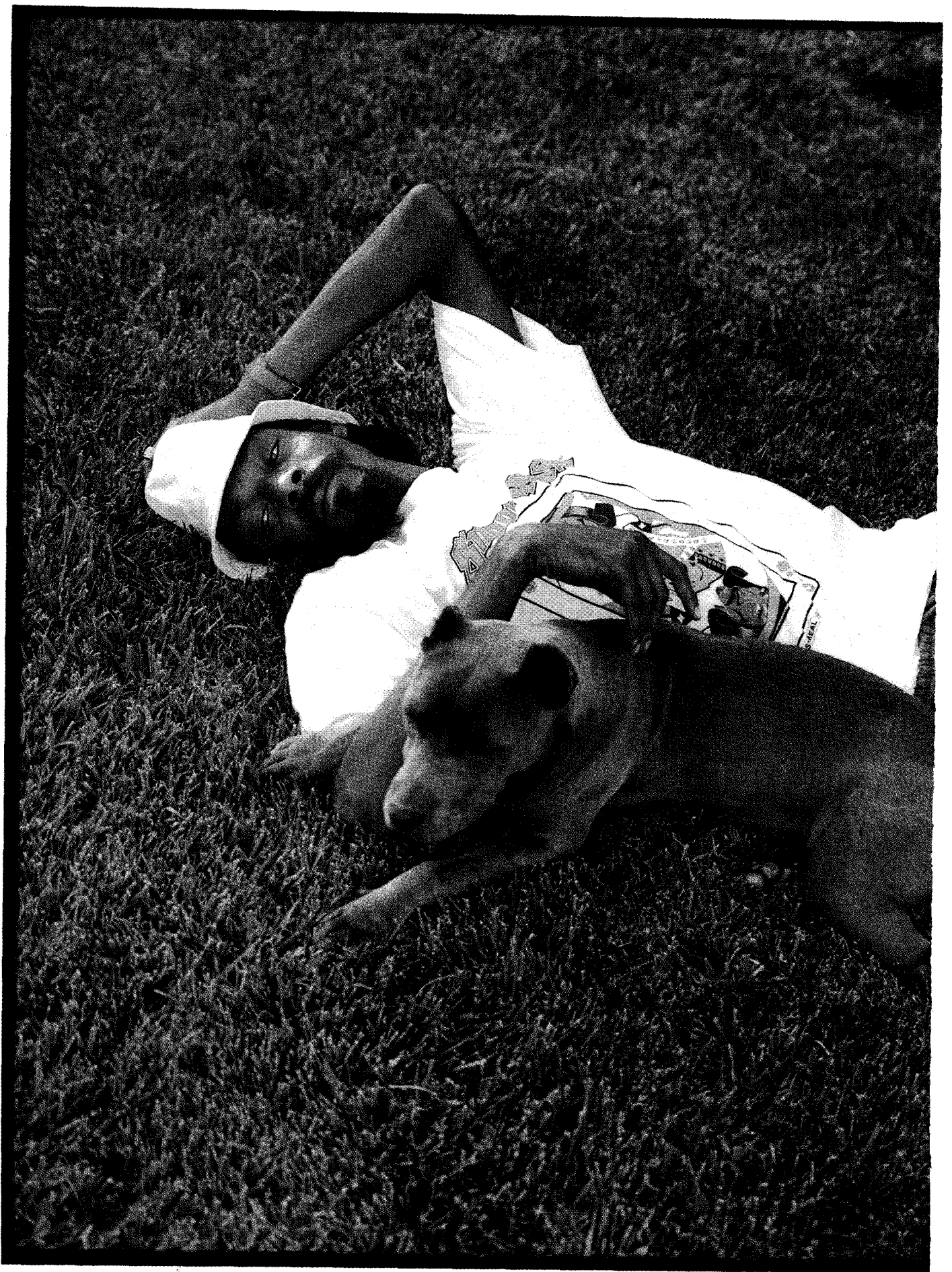
Opposite: Lil' Bow Wow, a fourteen-year-old from Columbus, Ohio, at the Hammerstein Ballroom, in New York City. He was discovered (and named) by Snoop Dogg, in 1993. Above: Trina cruises Biscayne Bay, in Miami, with her crew, the Slip-N-Slide Express.



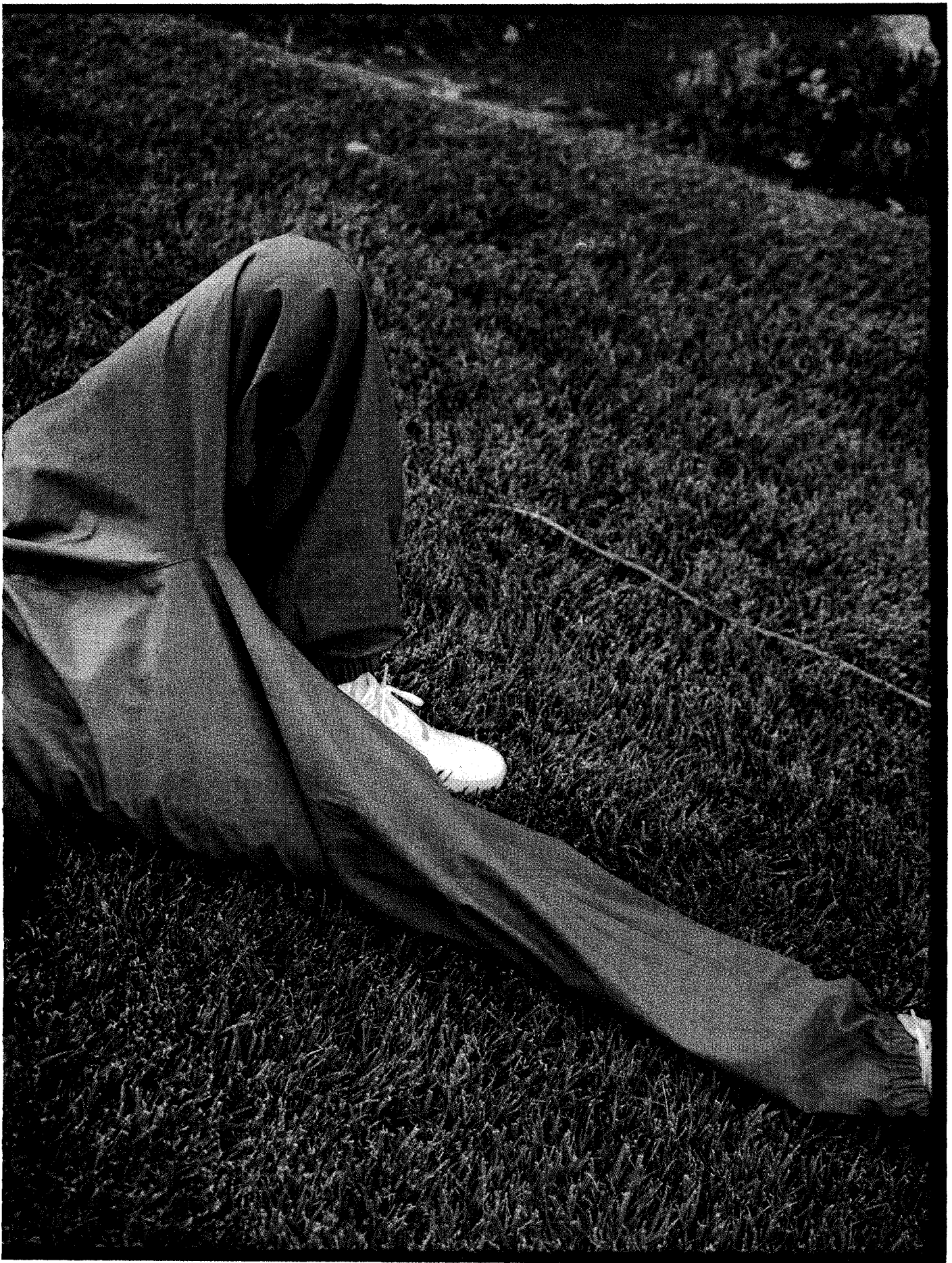
OutKast—Dre3000 (left) and Big Boi—after a show in their home town, Atlanta. They call themselves ATLiens, rather than Atlantans. Right: South Park Mexican, a hero of the underground rap scene in Houston, with his daughter and his son.







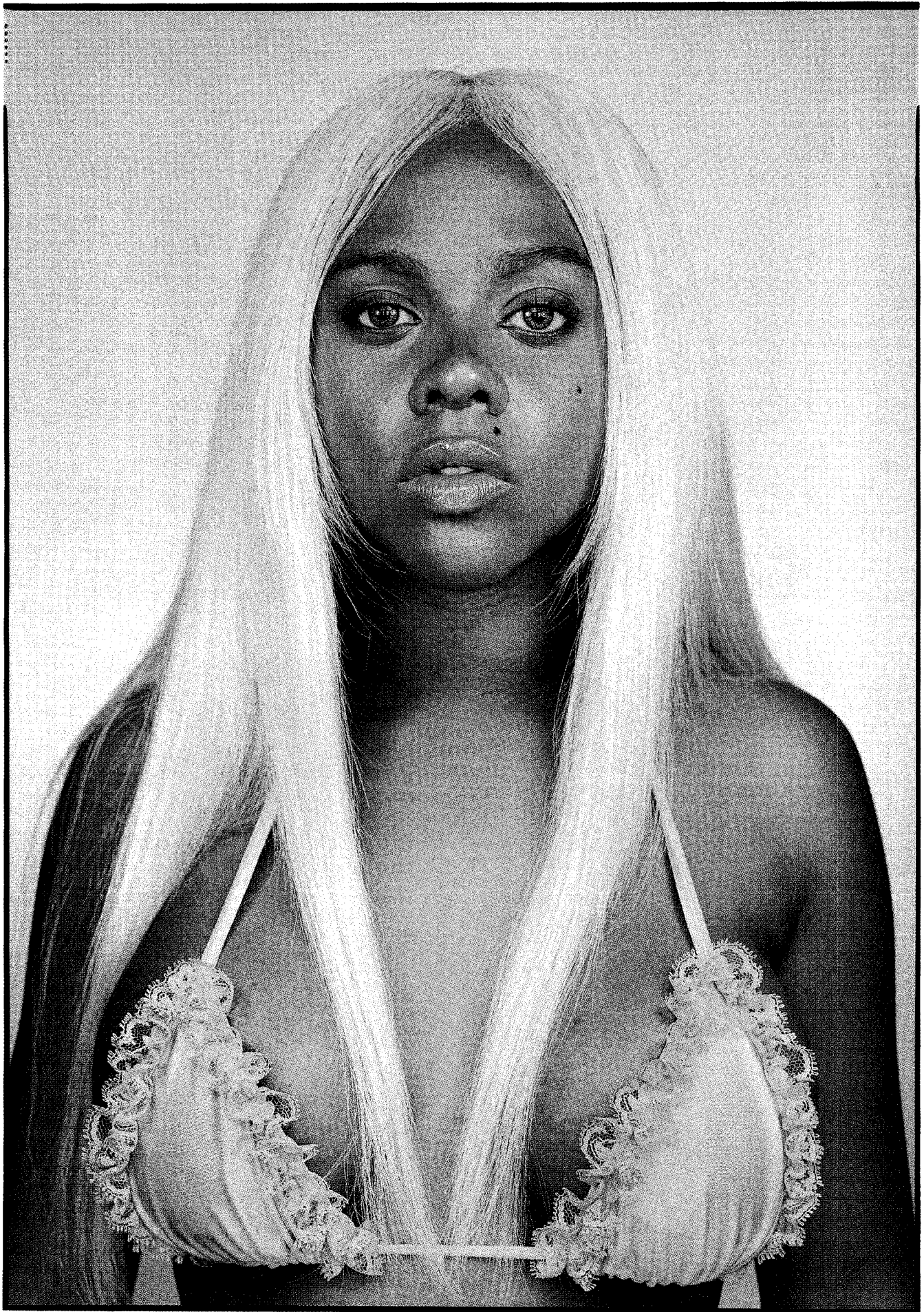
Snoop Dogg, the West Coast's most popular rapper, with his dog, at home in Claremont, California. He made his début in 1992, on th



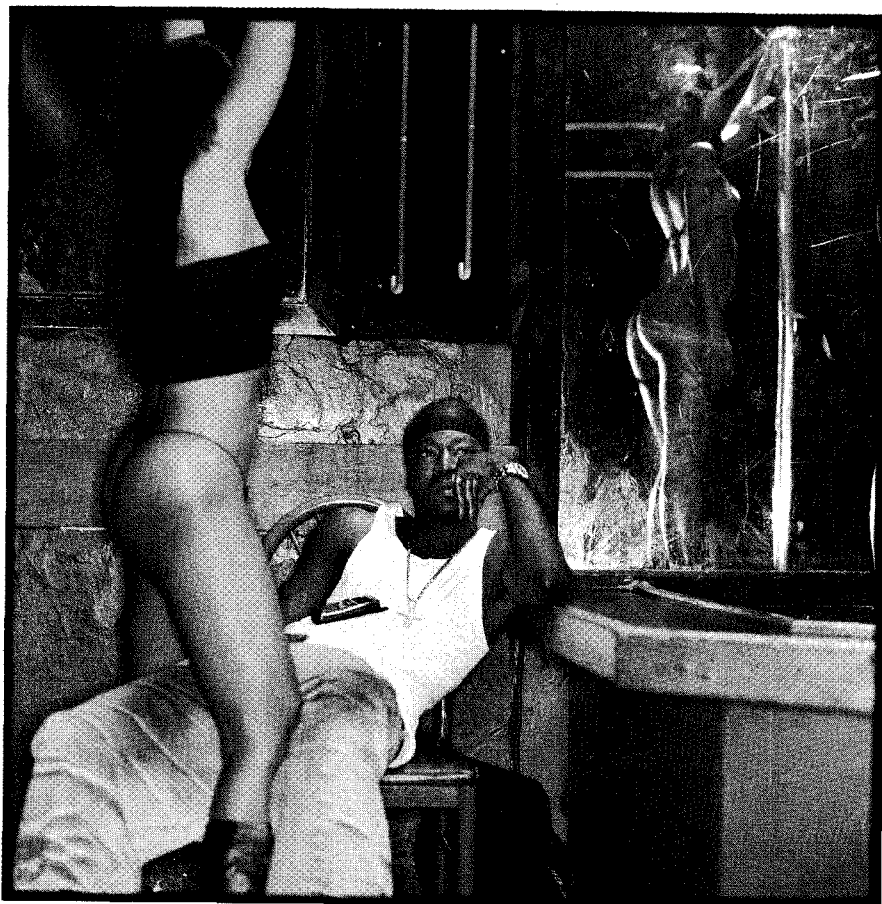
Soundtrack of the film "Deep Cover."



Bahamadia, an emerging star, at her local playground, in Philadelphia. Opposite: Lil' Kim, Brooklyn's most glamorous rapper. As a tribute to her mentor, the late Notorious B.I.G., she called her new album "The Notorious K.I.M."



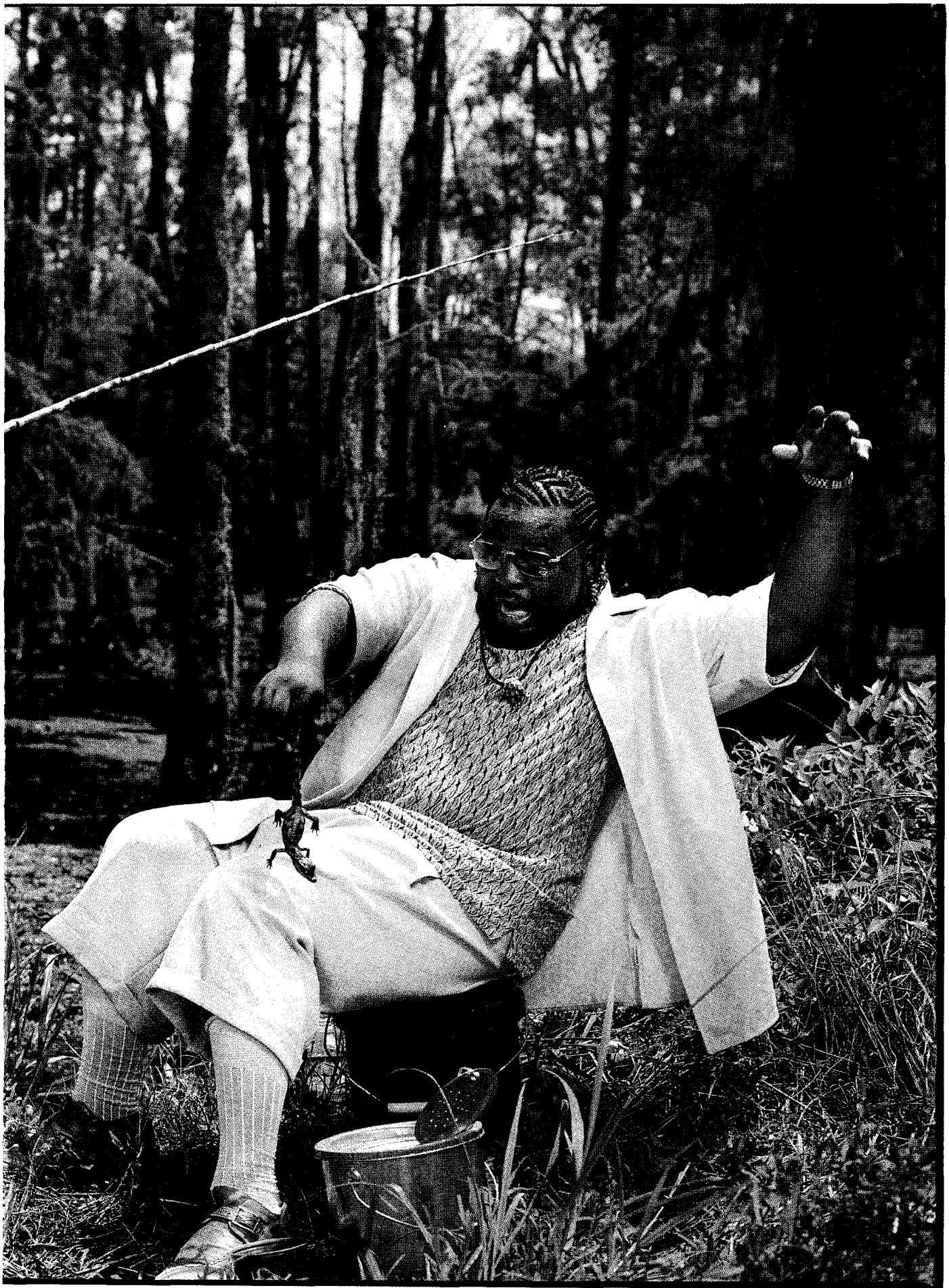




Left: Kurtis Blow, in the Bronx, where hip-hop started. His debut album, "Kurtis Blow," released in 1980, was the first major-label rap album. Above: Trick Daddy at a strip club in Miami. He is Florida's most popular rap act since 2 Live Crew.



*The group Dirty—Mr. G'Stacka
and Big Pimp—fishing in Montgomery,
Alabama, with Big Pimp's pet alligator.*



SABA

LETTER FROM EUROPE

OPERA WARS

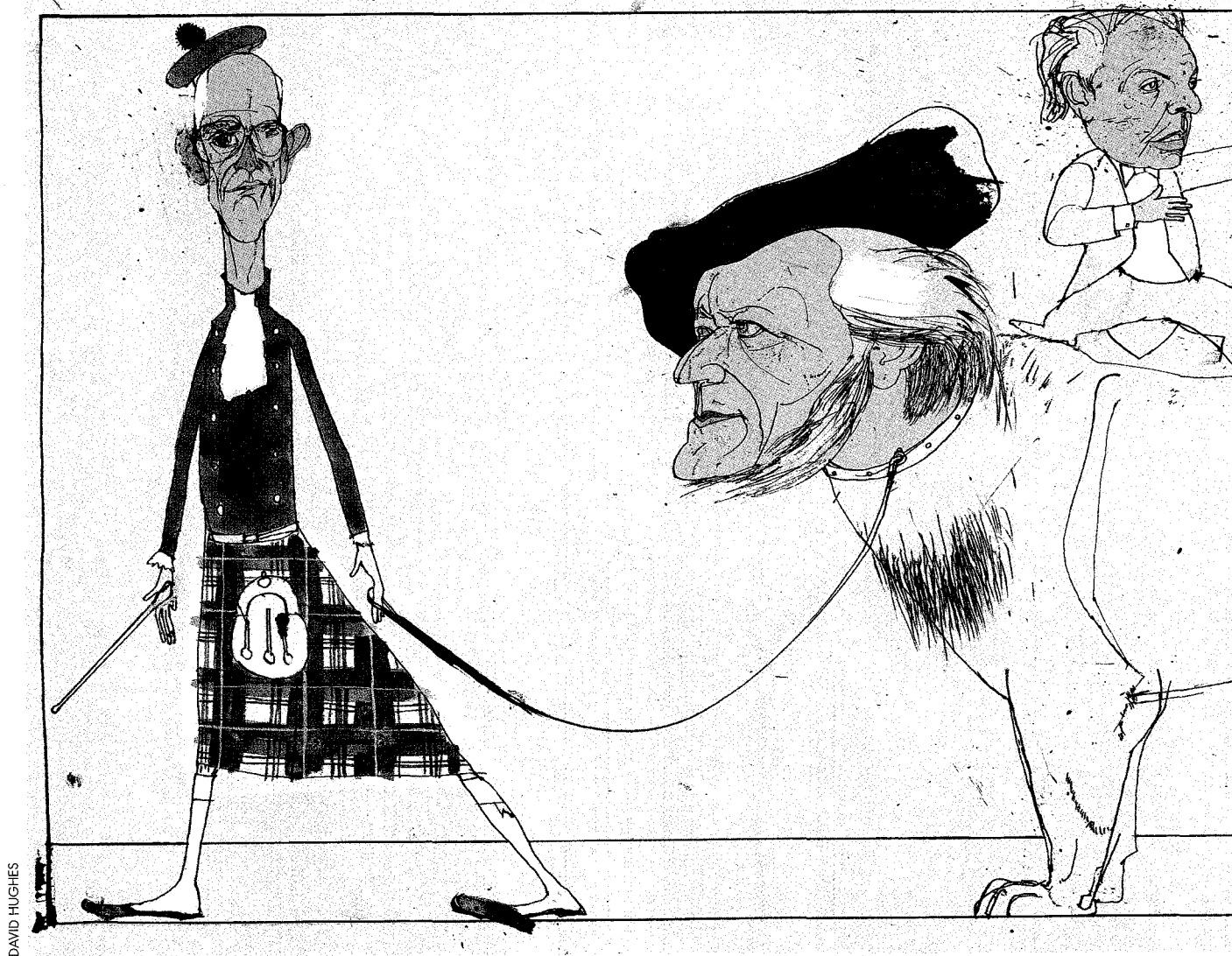
How German should German music be?

BY JANE KRAMER

There is a big, beautiful, tawny German dog called a Leonberger—after the town of Leonberg, a few miles north of Stuttgart, and the lion rearing on its town crest. “A lion among dogs” is the way Heinrich Essig, the breeder (and town booster) who invented Leonbergers, in the eighteen-forties, described them to his customers, and he was right. Today, when you buy a Leonberger you get a hundred and thirty pounds of brown and golden black-tipped fur—something

larger than life, something soul-stirring, a *Gesamtkunstwerk* of a dog that makes the neighbors’ dogs seem slight and even frivolous by comparison, like little bel-canto interlopers yapping under the big sky of Wagner country. And never mind that the first Leonbergers were white, or as close to white as Essig was able to make them. The year he started selling Leonbergers was the year Wagner finished the first draft of “Lohengrin,” the opera whose hero enters with a white swan.

White was fashionable in Germany in the eighteen-forties, and perhaps Essig was making the Wagnerian point that he was the definitively German kennel master, producing a mythic beast for a mythic people. He claimed that only the noblest, oldest, mightiest races had gone into his secret formula—St. Bernards, Pyrenean mountain dogs, and Landseers—and ignored the jealous breeders who accused him of adding a generous splash of mutt, for vigor. Oddly, he had his first suc-



Sir Peter Jonas helped mediate the controversy centered on the conductors Daniel Barenboim and Christian Thielemann, at rival Berli

cess among foreigners, at least, the kind who liked size and could afford the food: the Romanovs, the Windsors, the Savoias, and the Bonapartes owned Leonbergers; the Hapsburgs apparently had seven. None of this counted at home, though—not when it came to the business of pitching high-priced, oversized, ur-German puppies to a Germany that was still a fractious collection of duchies, principalities, and free states waiting to become a country. Leonbergers took off in Germany when Heinrich Essig was able to tell his customers that Richard Wagner had one, too.

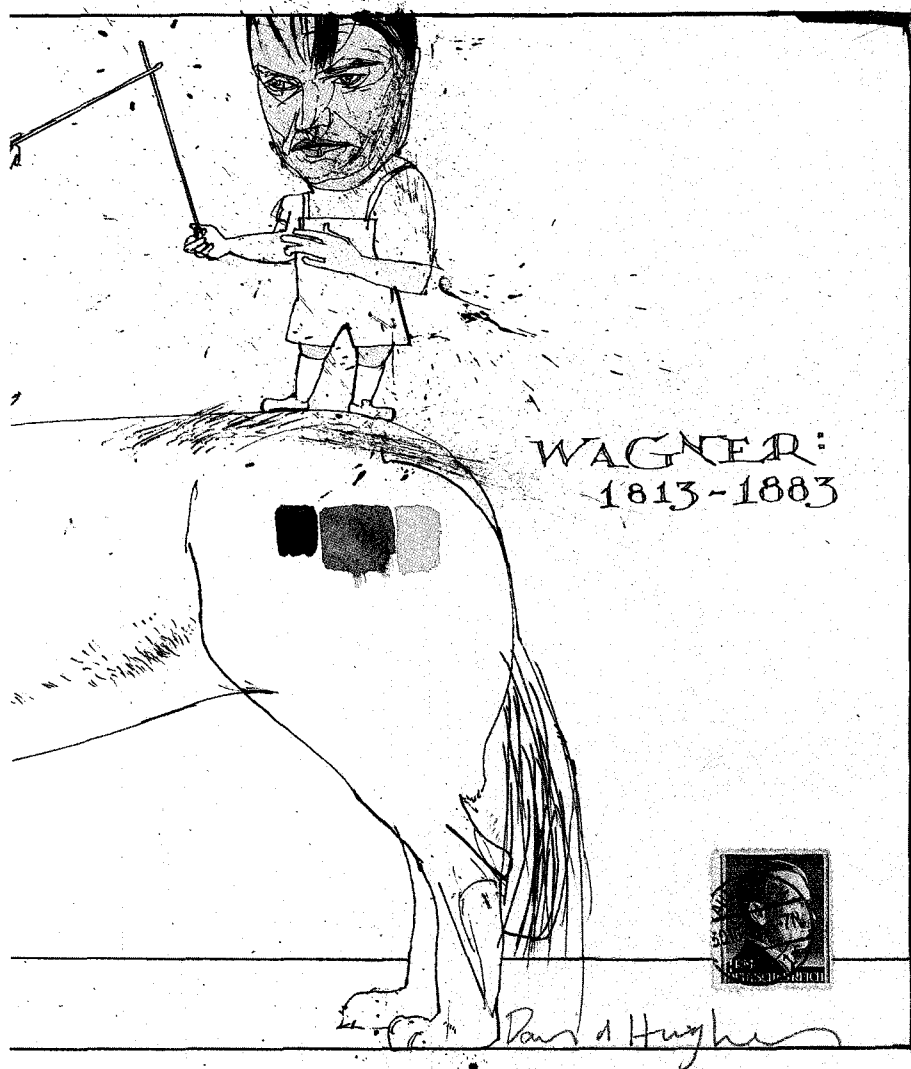
One day in Berlin this spring, I mentioned to a friend that I was going to see Christian Thielemann, the conductor and music director of the Deutsche Oper, the biggest of the city's three opera houses, and my friend said dryly that Thielemann, whose work is known for

its rather ravishing patriotism, was the "Leonberger of German conductors"—the conductor who was going to restore the great German repertory to the natives, taking it back from all the foreigners who liked it and claimed that it belonged to them, too. I wasn't surprised. Berlin was one of my last stops on a battlefield tour of what the German papers were calling the "opera-house wars" (the war of the Wagners, over the succession at Bayreuth, and the war of the conductors, over the funding and fate of Berlin's opera companies, were merely the most sensational), and by then it would have been clear to anyone on that tour that there was more at issue than money or jobs or favor or the traditions of a particular house, or, for that matter, talent. Even in Berlin—a city reeling under the costs of turning a once lavishly subsidized West Berlin and a nearly bankrupt

East Berlin into a German capital, and going thirty billion dollars into debt in the process—the only talent (or lack of talent) under discussion was that of the politicians who had failed so spectacularly to pull it off. The opera-house wars were about another kind of politics. They were about people in the arts putting a patent on Germanness. Or, you could say, they were about the Germanness of German music—about who understands it, and who gets to play it, and how it should be performed, and whether Germany loses some vital narrative of itself when those decisions are in the hands of strangers. By the time I got to Berlin, late in April, the opera-house wars reminded me so much of the arguments Essig had had with rival breeders about the purity of his German dogs that I thought of them as musical manifestations of the Leonberger syndrome.

A few weeks earlier, in Munich, Sir Peter Jonas, the Staatsintendant—or general and artistic director—of the Bayerische Staatsoper and something of a mutt himself, being a vigorous combination of Scotch Catholic and Hamburg Jew, with a splash of Lebanese Christian, had told me that Thielemann once cancelled a contract with him, at the last minute, because of what Thielemann's agent described as "his strong feelings against" a production of "Tannhäuser" he was scheduled to conduct there. ("He recently saw the telecast of this production . . . and is so totally opposed to the producer's concept that he cannot conduct it," the agent's letter said, referring, as it turned out, to the famous procession of Wartburg nobles in the second act, which in its new Munich incarnation took place on a long gallery below the inscription "Germania Nostra"—an allusion to Albert Speer's "Germania"—and featured a preening chorus, dressed in dark tunics and silvery-black gowns, that strongly resembled the kind of rich crowd you usually see at Munich's summer opera festival, where in fact it had had its première.)

Jonas's Bayerische Staatsoper is, like its crowd, rich—being the happy recipient of a forty-million-dollar-a-year state subsidy, one of the highest in Germany, which Jonas likes to describe as "our share of Bavaria's Counter-Reformation ritual of princely patronage." It is also arguably the most important opera company in the country, as well as one of the best



pera houses, and the music they direct, especially the works of Richard Wagner.

and, sometimes, one of the most surprising. And it was, inadvertently, my introduction to the opera-house wars. Three years ago, on the opening night of a new "Elektra"—just after Klytämnestra had made her entrance, draped in a huge cloak in the colors and pattern of the traditional house curtain—Richard Strauss, the composer's notoriously conservative elder grandson, stood up, glowering, and walked out, followed reluctantly by his wife; Jonas, who was sitting near me, leaned over, smiling, and whispered, "We must be doing something right!" It occurred to me then that, while I had seen people in other countries walk out of operas because the orchestra was bad or the chorus off key or the soprano screechy, or even because they hated the sets or the staging, I had never seen anyone leave because of a disrespectful cloak. "Tannhäuser," of course, is a different story. Like "Die Meistersinger," it has always been an opera that plays directly to German passions about identity. David Alden, who directed the Munich "Tannhäuser" (and is an American living in London), told me this spring that even the tenor who originally sang the title role had strong feelings against the sign saying "Germania Nostra," and against what he called "the chaos" of Alden's interpretations.

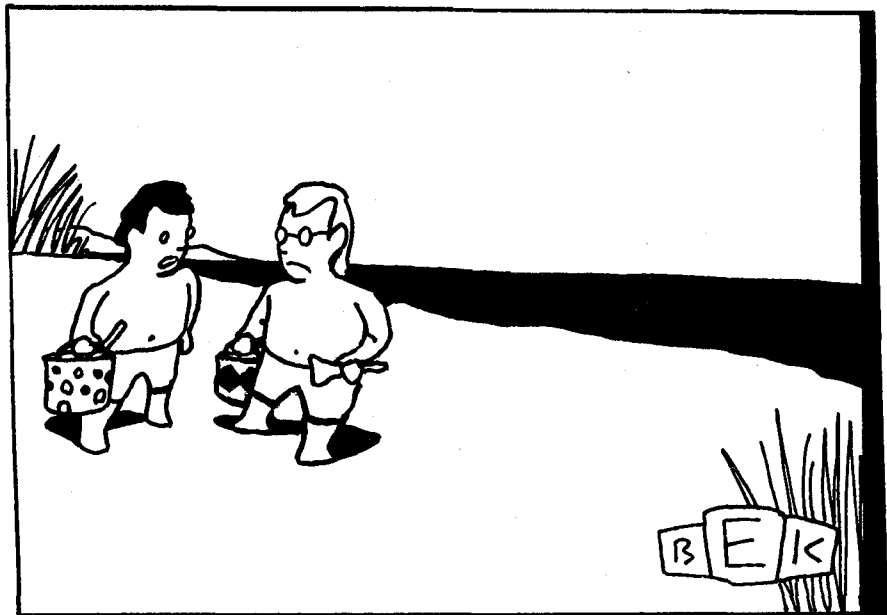
Of course, there was nothing new about Germans arguing over German operas, and especially over a Wagner

opera. (Some German intellectuals won't even go to a Wagner opera; the philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who lives near Munich, refuses on principle.) But what was new—at least, for an American whose idea of an opera war was the fairly innocent spectacle of artists squabbling operatically, about money or temperament or turf or vanity or reputation, or whether the cloak was pretty—was the passion those arguments could evoke in Germans now. I had read Wagner on music. I had read Theodor Adorno, arguing with Wagner a hundred years later. I had even got down my college copy of Thomas Mann's "Dr. Faustus," looking for the passage with the famous distinction—the famously German distinction—between the language of literature and "that other, perhaps more intense, but strangely inarticulate language, that of tones," which seems "to belong to a world of the spirit for whose absolute reliability in the things of reason and human dignity I would not just care to put my hand in the fire." But once I got to the new, united, turn-of-the-millennium-opera-wars Berlin, I decided that Tacitus, who had never even been there, probably said it all (or, at any rate, said it first and said it simply) nineteen hundred years ago, when he wrote that the tribes called "German," having chosen to be "a particular people, pure and only like themselves," put their most "violent exertion" into frightening their enemies with

strange, clamorous music that seems to originate deep in their throats, and that their one "historical tradition" involved the singing and guarding of long songs about their mythic ancestors.

Germany makes more good opera available to more people than any other country. When I counted this spring, there were eighty-five German opera companies, and the hit of the season was a "Ring" in Meiningen, a town of twenty-five thousand people, that had been two years in preparation and closed last month after sixteen performances (or four full cycles), to general agreement that the project had been more than worth it. Berlin, since the Wall fell, has had three of those companies to support. In West Berlin, there is Thielemann's Deutsche Oper, installed since the early sixties in an undistinguished new Charlottenburg building that nevertheless has the best acoustics and by far the most seats. In East Berlin, there is the Komische Oper, installed since 1947 in a kitschy turn-of-the-century music hall and *maison de rendezvous* that used to be called the Metropol. And on the old imperial boulevard of Unter den Linden, which runs from the Schlossplatz through Museum Island to the Brandenburg Gate, there is the Staatsoper, still in the theatre built for the company in 1742 by Frederick the Great, its founder and patron (and still waiting for its fourth tier, which the East Germans neglected to replace during a perfunctory postwar restoration). Berlin, since the Wall fell, has also had to accept the alarming prospect of "normalcy," a condition understood correctly by Berliners to mean an end to the fat, federal, Cold War subsidies—including arts subsidies—which, after forty years, were normalcy for them. The local politicians referred to the improbable glut of opera houses as "institutional duplication," and they had a point, though it has to be said that they rarely used that term for institutions that enriched *them*. In the event, no one in politics in Berlin seemed much concerned about the votes of a handful of cognoscenti who liked living in a city that could offer them three different "Elektra"s, "Magic Flute"s, and "Figaro"s to compare in a single season (as Berlin just did).

At the time I met Christian Thielemann, the Deutsche Oper and the Staats-



"Apparently, when the tide came in, a lot of castles went bust."

oper were almost constantly in the news, thanks to the unfortunate (though not necessarily inadvertent) reference one of those politicians had made to the competing claims on public money and attention of “the Jew Barenboim” and “the young von Karajan, Thielemann.” Thielemann, of course, was the authentically German half of the comparison, and Daniel Barenboim, as everyone in the music world knew, was not only the conductor and music director of the Staatsoper but also the conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and an Argentine-born Jew with an Israeli passport, a summer workshop for young Arab and Israeli musicians, and a passion for the same German repertory that Thielemann liked to conduct at his opera house. The politician himself, Klaus Landowsky—he was then leader of the Christian Democratic faction in Berlin’s parliament, head of the real-estate loans division at the bank it controlled, and Dick Cheney to its affable and famously dim mayor, Eberhard Diepgen—had since moved on to bigger scandals, the biggest involving three hundred million dollars’ worth of credit extended by the bank to a group of speculators in his party, and the twenty-thousand-dollar “campaign contribution” he’d accepted from them first. But Berlin’s opera wars had been clarified, if not transformed, by what he’d said. Most Berliners agreed that there was something close to the sublime in German music, but Barenboim’s side maintained, reasonably, that the sublime thing about the sublime was that it spoke to everyone, whereas Thielemann’s side seemed to be saying that it took a German to reply in kind.

Thielemann is considered a fine—many people, including Barenboim, have said a brilliant—conductor, and his musicians say that he lives for music, by which they mean that he lives for them, and has the kind of celebrity that sells their records. But, at forty-two, he isn’t politic and he certainly isn’t an intellectual. Few of his admirers claim actually to like him. They will tell you that his enthusiasms—including his enthusiasm for Germany—are, perhaps, a little uncensored, a little primitive, a little aggressively immature. (A critic in Zurich, hearing him conduct “Die Meistersinger,” wrote that his performance was “magnificent, even spell-binding,” but couldn’t help asking



“Before you go, could we exchange smiles?”

whether anyone should really be allowed to “play and interpret this music so militaristically,” or to appeal so directly to the people’s most ungovernable instincts.) Barenboim, at fifty-eight, is cosmopolitan, subtle, and very smart, and his enthusiasms, you could say, are, like his repertory, mellower and more generous. Thielemann is, by his own account, proudly provincial; he would rather be in Berlin than in any other city. Barenboim is peripatetic—his critics say overextended—and stubbornly at home anywhere that music is played, from Berlin to Chicago, and indeed from Bayreuth, where he put in eighteen seasons, to Jerusalem, where he took on his own government this summer by conducting selections from “Tristan und Isolde,” after agreeing to its demand that he drop Wagner from his program. (He made an end run around the problem by conducting an approved program and, once it was over, having a long and “very personal” debate with the audience and *then* playing Wagner; “brazen, arrogant, uncivilized, and insensitive,” the mayor of Jerusalem said.) A music critic in Berlin once described the “Barenboim sound” to me (not entirely approvingly) as “a belief that, with music, everything is better in the world.” A critic in Stuttgart described the Thielemann sound to me as “a hundred and twenty musicians playing German music written between 1860 and 1920. Whatever he plays, it all sounds like that.”

It’s hard to imagine Thielemann tackling a piece by a cerebral contemporary foreign composer like Pierre Boulez (as Barenboim has often done in concerts). “I don’t trust people my age who are polyglot,” Thielemann told me. “I stand with my feet on the ground of German music.” But the fact is, as the critic said, that everything about Thielemann “sounds” German, even the ardor he seems to inspire, in the manner of a Teutonic Mishima. He practices at the Deutsche Oper on a 1911 Bechstein, under a portrait of Frederick the Great. (“My model of tolerance,” he says.) He writes at a Bauhaus desk. He naps on a couch under a painting of a shutter on a window in a wall of the Charlottenburg Castle. He refers to himself (at least, he did when I saw him) as “that very rare thing for Berlin . . . a conductor born here.” He’s right about that—Claudio Abbado is leaving the Berlin Philharmonic after twelve years; Simon Rattle has been asked to replace him; Kent Nagano is already leading the German Symphony Orchestra—though, of course, the same could be said of any big city with good music. Given the number of people who credit Thielemann with saying that Barenboim’s departure would put “an end to all this Juderei” in the city (he denied it, sued a politician for repeating the story, and lost), the phrase “born here” was one of his nicer distinctions. Barenboim, who once hired Thielemann as his assistant at Bay-

reuth (and has invited him to conduct in Chicago three times), says, "He's the only one of my assistants I don't keep up with."

In the spring of 2000, a Munich curator and soon-to-be-born-again Christian Democrat named Christoph Stölzl became Berlin's new Senator for Culture, and, for most of the public, that was when the opera was first got serious. Stölzl had arrived in Berlin in the early nineties, dispatched by Helmut Kohl to open a new German Historical Museum in the old Prussian arsenal on Unter den Linden, and in Berlin's local political circles he counted as imported talent—which is to say, as talent. He was ingratiating, superficial, and shrewd, a man who (as he put it to me when his museum opened with Goethe's dining-room chairs prominent in the main hall and the years of National Socialism relegated to a small, dark room) regarded Germany's past as "a river of the Enlightenment," interrupted, presumably, by a few muddy tributaries. He must have convinced the Mayor that he could save Berlin a lot of the money it now spent on its three opera houses—a hundred and twelve million dollars a year, or eight million dollars more than the entire annual budget of the National Endowment for the Arts—and at the same time dispose of its incipient opera wars as conveniently as he had disposed of a world war in his exhibition. The result was that, last fall, Stölzl unveiled a plan for putting the three opera houses under one administration, creating a common pool of singers, musicians, and dancers, from which they would all draw, and dividing the repertory among them, with light opera assigned to the Komische and "small" operas (Baroque, bel canto, Mozart) to the Staatsoper, leaving the big nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century blockbusters to the Deutsche Oper and Thielemann. In the process, Barenboim's available orchestra would be reduced along with his repertory, and his own plan for a Berlin Wagner festival next year shattered—all of which Barenboim took to mean that the plan was really an elaborate pretext to get rid of *him*. What was clear was that Stölzl intended to close the house on Unter den Linden for a badly needed restoration—and perhaps to keep it closed until Barenboim got tired of waiting and moved on to an-

other house in another city, whereupon Thielemann would inherit the company and the new fourth tier and end up with two opera houses at his disposal and Wagner all to himself. There was nothing Thielemann said or did to refute this. What he liked about Stölzl's plan, he told me, was "the parity."

Twelve of the most important German opera intendants were out of the country, at a meeting in Zurich, when they first heard about the "plan" for solving Berlin's "opera crisis." Peter Jonas remembers the day, October 14th, because it was his fifty-fourth birthday. He even remembers the moment the fax from his office started coming in, because his friend Klaus Zehelein, the intendant of the Staatsoper Stuttgart, had just opened his second pack of cigarettes and the room was smoky, and nobody—certainly not Jonas—was going to complain. But what he remembers most, he told me, is how angry they all were, because Stölzl had never consulted them.

The people who run opera companies in Germany have a special status. They are paid by the city or state that funds their companies to be the impresarios of its opera culture, and while they have politicians rather than rich boards to contend with, a good intendant can be as decorative, politically speaking, as a trophy wife, and usually gets his contract renewed. The great ones, like Zehelein—who is a brilliant dramaturge, with a theory of narrative he likes to describe as "deconstructionist in the Jacques Derrida sense"—and indeed like Jonas himself, become powerful cultural *personages*, not only the public face of an opera house but in a very real way its identity, and people associate them with a particular style and character, and even a particular take on Germanness. Jonas, for example, is known for his vision of the Bayerische Staatsoper as a sophisticated and eclectic big-city house, and for the art with which he can cajole a Bavarian audience into accepting and even expecting that kind of house. He shocks the season-ticket traditionalists with a radical new "Parsifal" one night, soothes them with a dusty old "Lucia" the next, and then courts their kids with pop productions of Handel and Monteverdi that are sexier, funnier, tougher, crueller—in every way, cooler and more perverse—than anything they'd ever considered entertain-

ment. There was no intendant in Berlin with that kind of reputation.

The intendants who were meeting in Zurich knew all about the problems at Berlin's opera houses. They knew that Berlin had lost the core of its old opera public (which is to say, its liberal, educated bourgeoisie) when it lost its Jews and its Social Democrats and its intellectuals to Hitler, and that contemporary Berlin, especially East Berlin, was largely a workers' city and didn't have anywhere near the audience that the big cities of the West could count on to fill a house, season after season. They knew that Berlin's own houses weren't doing very much to replenish the audience they had. (Thielemann's was aging, and its tastes were predictable; Barenboim's depended to a large extent on tourists making their first visit to the new capital, and the tickets were often so expensive that most Berliners couldn't afford them anyway.) The intendants knew that there wasn't much energy in some of Berlin's productions; some were conventional, and others were simply bad. They knew that money got wasted, and that, in every season with three "Figaro"s to compare, there were going to be too many days with no opera in Berlin at all. They knew that Barenboim was stubborn when it came to his own limits, that his company needed a real intendant—someone who was more of an artistic director and less of a bureaucrat than the one he had. And they knew that Thielemann and *his* intendant, Udo Zimmermann—who was still officially at his last job, with the Oper Leipzig, and wouldn't take over the Deutsche Oper for another ten months—already disliked each other so intensely that Thielemann had even announced his resignation (he changed his mind when another conductor accepted the job and the orchestra lobbied to get him back), and that now, as one musician put it, the two men "communicated by sabotage."

Still, as Jonas said later, the real crisis wasn't an "opera crisis." It was a "Berlin crisis." It didn't take much imagination to see that the politicians running Berlin were complaining about the cost of opera houses in order to distract a public that might otherwise be asking how they had managed to saddle the city with a debt of thirty billion dollars. On the other hand, it was hard to imagine that anyone running or conducting a serious opera com-

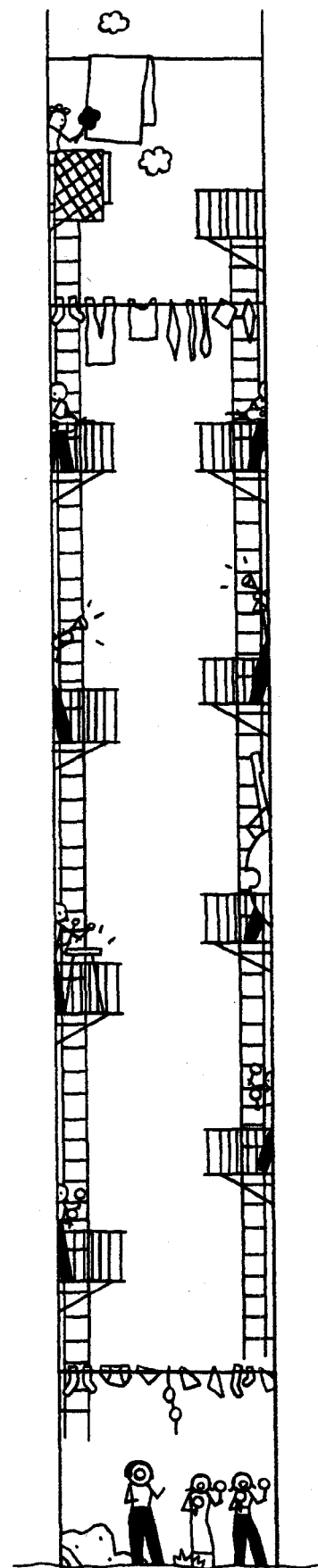
pany would willingly trade in his troubles for a pool of artists that his rivals would inevitably raid, or take his assignments from a questionably talented museum curator who seemed to think of the Second World War as a tributary. Oddly enough, the one intendant I met in Germany who hadn't found Stölzl's plan outrageous (or, as he now says, "wasn't against it") was Udo Zimmermann. Zimmermann is a conductor himself, as well as a composer of operas best described as "modern East German operas." But he was known in the West mainly for the size of his ambitions (he was already talking about a "Spielberg 'Ring,'" though, to his credit, his biggest ambition was to add contemporary opera to the company's resolutely Romantic repertory) and for the accommodations he was willing to make to achieve them. He had courted the culture senator who originally hired him from Leipzig (a man remembered for having once said, "Culture is the fitness center of the soul"). Now he was courting Stölzl. If Zimmermann "wasn't against" Stölzl's plan for an opera administration, it may be because he was fairly certain of running it himself. He wasn't in Zurich, anyway, to change anybody else's mind.

Two weeks later, Peter Jonas borrowed the auditorium at Berlin's public-radio station and invited the press and the local party leaders, along with Christoph Stölzl and anyone else who was interested, to a debate of Stölzl's plan. Eight hundred people came, and the discussion went on for hours, with Jonas, Zehelein, and the intendant of the Zurich opera, Alexander Pereira, representing the intendants and their association, and Stölzl (who agreed to come only after he learned that the debate was being broadcast) representing himself. It wasn't really a fair contest, given the experience collected on the intendants' side, and no one following it was much surprised when Jonas and his friends, volunteering their services for a look at the books of Berlin's three houses, came up with a few suggestions that would not only leave those houses intact but actually save more money at the outset than all of Stölzl's suggestions put together.

Jonas is the kind of person the French describe as having *un chromosome en plus*—an indefatigable impresario of en-

thusiasm and occasion (and, by his own admission, a ham), who takes the stage at Munich's Prinzregententheater every Christmas to read "A Christmas Carol," in German, to a delighted crowd, and a week later, on New Year's Eve, can be found onstage at the Nationaltheater, playing master of ceremonies in the annual "Fledermaus." Bavarians love titles and they love spectacles, including the occasional spectacle of themselves at the opera in dress *Trachten*, and especially the spectacle of their dashing Staatsintendant, in his box, in the full formal regalia—kilt, plaid, sporran, and high-laced brogues—of the Campbells, his grandmother's clan, which he wears a couple of times a year to entertain them. Even in Munich, a resolutely Social Democratic town with a mayor who began his career as a standup comic at a political cabaret, people refer to Peter Jonas as Sir Peter and correct you crossly when you don't.

Jonas arrived in Munich in 1993, restless after nine very successful years at the English National Opera and looking for a challenge—something difficult he could pull off in the house where "Tristan," "Die Meistersinger," and two of the "Ring" operas had all had their world premières. "What happened here hit quite toughly" is how he describes the reaction he seemed to inspire in some people just by being there. It wasn't only the mistakes he made, coming from what was still, for all practical purposes, Margaret Thatcher's England to a city where the left sounded like Jesse Helms on the subject of "elitist art," and the right paid for that art. It wasn't the critics. It wasn't even the hate mail—the anonymous letter with a lump of dried shit, the woman who wanted to see him "deported," the doctor who still writes to say that he's as "unnecessary to the *Volksgeundheit*" as mad-cow disease. People in opera are used to hate mail. (Jonas puts his in a desk drawer he calls "the stink box.") What surprised Jonas was the hysteria he encountered over his second commissioned opera; it was based on "Slaughterhouse Five," Kurt Vonnegut's novel about the Dresden bombing, and was already scheduled to open the Munich Opera Festival in the summer of 1996 when some of the festival patrons decided that the word "slaughterhouse" was a deliberate, subversive, *British* reference to them, and even that the swastika formed by a





"Listen up, my fine people, and I'll sing you a song 'bout a brave neurosurgeon who done something wrong."

bomber propeller on the poster designed for the festival constituted a libel against the German people. (The composer, Hans-Jürgen von Bose, who was born in Munich, wasn't surprised at all.)

At the time, Jonas's personal experience with the German opera wars was more or less confined to the complaints of Richard Strauss, who referred to him as "that Englishman," and to a skirmish with a civil servant from the Bavarian Ministry of Culture, who had sat as a guest of the house and led the booing at the opening of a "Giulio Cesare" that featured a dinosaur and, as Jonas points out, became immensely popular—"my best-seller"—because of "Jurassic Park." (Jonas dispatched a snuffy note reminding the bureaucrat that honor, protocol, and the "noble tradition" of the house, not to mention good manners, obliged an official guest "to express the distaste politely, through silence.") Jonas's weapons were presence, intellect, and a kind of infectious and highly articulate imperviousness to the claims of stupid or offensive people, which gave him a moral high ground often described by his admirers as "the British confidence," and by Jonas himself as "ten years' training" with the monks at a Benedictine boarding school in Sussex. And he had the support of his culture minister, Hans

Zehetmair, who was burnishing an image as the avant-gardist of the Christian Social Union but, alas, may be destined to enter music history as the man who, in 1990, signed off on the lifetime contract that Wagner's grandson Wolfgang—eighty-two, reputedly senile, and still running the Bayreuth Festival, with an eye to installing his second wife in the job—now refuses to renounce.

Jonas's published reply to the people who tried to stop von Bose's opera on "German" principles began as a lesson in the ironies of language and denial, and ended as a course on composition, performance, and the "fragility of achievements." "Slaughterhouse Five" opened on schedule and, it turned out, wasn't much of an achievement to begin with. (It was dropped from the repertory in less than two years.) Jonas, however, lasted, and is now three years into his second contract, with Zubin Mehta as his music director and chief conductor. And a lot of the people who used to describe him, at best, as "*not* German" now describe him warmly as "international"—someone who was courted all over Europe and had chosen *them*. He is still juggling the productions he commissioned with the ones he inherited, being responsible for two hundred and thirty nights of opera a year—which translates into forty-

five different operas. Those operas now include a "Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria" conducted by Ivor Bolton and directed by David Alden, the American whose "Tannhäuser" Thielemann hated. Alden has brought back "Germania"—he swears for the last time—by way of a miniature set of Speer's Berlin, with the gods and their Playboy Bunnies dancing on the rooftops, and this time the curtain came down on opening night to twenty-two minutes of applause.

In a way, the most that Jonas and his colleagues could do for Berlin last year was what they did do: storm the citadels of the bureaucracy and prove that a few experts, given a few days and the authority that comes from being free agents in somebody else's city, could trim a budget better than Christoph Stölzl. They (and, of course, Barenboim, who can rally friends of the Staatsoper as powerful as Richard von Weizsäcker, and undoubtedly did) saw to it that Stölzl's plan died, or, more accurately, that it disappeared, which happened quietly by the Christmas holidays. Some people found it presumptuous for three intendants from three of the wealthiest cities in Western Europe to pretend to understand anything about Berlin, which was fast getting to be one of the poorest. Others complained that the savings the intendants proposed were, at most, paper savings—that Berlin was going to have to shut down *something*, because rich states like Jonas's and Zehelein's had made it clear that they were through paying. West Germans had paid for unification, and for parity for the East German mark, and for the beginnings of parity for East German workers, and for rebuilding and resettling a federal government in the no man's land of central Berlin, and at the end of the day East Germans had called them carpetbaggers or imperialists or worse. But, as Berliners themselves said, the politicians who wouldn't pay for a national opera in Berlin in the year 2000 were usually the same politicians who ten years ago had fought hardest for unification and had even fought, against the advice of many German liberals, for moving the government of a powerfully restored Germany "home."

In the event, Berlin's own government fell this summer. A Social Democrat named Klaus Wowereit took over the city as interim mayor, and then Stölzl

was out of a job and disappeared, too. Adrienne Goehler, who replaced him at the Berlin Senat, is an art-school principal, a feminist, and a Green Party activist imported from Hamburg and not known to be involved in anybody's opera wars. Officially, her job is temporary—like the Mayor's, it lasts only until Berlin goes to the polls, in October—but in all likelihood she'll get to keep it. The first public statement she made was that she hadn't come to Berlin to close an opera house, which some people took as a sign that, of course, she had. The city has since cancelled work on a new subway, closed most of its public swimming pools, fired its bankers, and in effect solved its financial crisis by going publicly bankrupt, but the opera wars are simply on vacation, like everyone else who can get away.

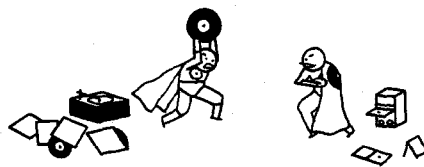
Last month, while Barenboim was in Jerusalem, making headlines, Thielemann was in Bayreuth, conducting "Die Meistersinger" for the second year, and talking to Wolfgang Wagner about the "Ring" he'll be doing there in 2006, with Wagner as his director. Bayreuth's own opera wars are such that Wagner has committed the festival to contracts like Thielemann's at least till then (some people say till 2010), effectively locking out any reasonable successor, including his daughter Eva Wagner-Pasquier, a consultant to the Metropolitan Opera and adviser at the Aix-en-Provence festival, who was offered the job this spring (and declined when he refused to leave), and his niece Nike Wagner, in Vienna, who recently published a very good history of their family—which, as she repeatedly points out, is still as cranky and disputatious as Nibelungen. Eva is known in opera circles as "the capable Wagner." Nike is known as "the intellectual Wagner." (She wants to run Bayreuth with Klaus Zehelein, who inspired a landmark "Ring" in Stuttgart last year by giving each opera to a different director with his own vision of the whole.) And her hope has been to open the festival to the work of contemporary composers who could be said to reflect a Wagnerian influence (or a reaction against that influence)—to give Wagner the "homage" of a living context. It was never a popular suggestion, but she told me that, for her, the issues at stake in Bayreuth, like the ones in Berlin, were much more serious than the

job that has come to symbolize them. She thought that the moment had come for Germans to talk about what they really mean by a Wagner tradition, or indeed by a German tradition, or even about what *she* meant when she said, as she just had, that Thielemann was "relatively apolitical, but in a Furtwängler way." (Wilhelm Furtwängler conducted the Berlin Philharmonic both during the war and after it.) I remembered Peter Jonas, talking about his first hard years in Munich, saying that they proved, at least, that "interpretive art is still part of the core of the society's arguments, that it *means* something," and adding, "I'd rather live with that stink box in my bottom drawer than with the idea that, apart from your box-office, there's nothing about opera worth discussing." But the truth is that some German operas are "discussed" more than others. People in Munich still argue more about Wagner and even Strauss (when I arrived, they were arguing about the politics of a new production of "Arabella") than they ever did about, say, "Fidelio," and Jonas had no real explanation for that, beyond the obvious one that Beethoven wrote "Fidelio" about liberty, and Strauss, who was born in Munich and raised a family close by, in Garmisch, wrote operas about *them*. And maybe Strauss *was* them—a weak man who wasn't a Leonberger, like Wagner, but who made himself agreeable enough to be able to spend the war in Vienna and to display, among his many prizes, a Bronze Bear from wartime Berlin and an honorary doctorate from a Midwestern American university.

Jonas has thought a great deal about the ironies of his new German life. This summer, after a Munich cardiologist saved that life for the second time in three months, he called to say that he'd been sitting in his flat all morning, trying to wrap his mind around the *layers* of irony in the fact that not only was he still in Munich, "ecstatic to be in Munich," but that the city that had nurtured Hitler in the country that his father had fled because of Hitler was now nurturing him, and doing it with the urgency

and all the special attention due to an important foreigner devoting himself to German culture. He wondered what his Hamburg grandfather would have made of that odd trajectory, because Julius Jonas—he was a well-known criminal lawyer, and a man of enough influence to have been let go the first two times the Gestapo seized him—never really believed that Nazis could last for long in the country of Bach and Beethoven and Goethe, and he couldn't bear the idea of living anywhere *but* Germany. (When his influence ran out, he put the family silver and jewelry on the piano, under the Max Liebermann portrait of his wife, left letters to his children, who were safe in England, and then he and Frau Jonas killed themselves.) In his grandfather's terms, Peter Jonas has come home. After two marriages and long, well-documented affairs with a Czech opera singer and a British recording star, he now lives happily with a young German musician named Barbara Burgdorf, who is a first violinist with the Bayerische Staatsoper orchestra. And, you could say, he stands with his feet on the ground of German music as much as Thielemann, or, for that matter, Barenboim, does. Their opera wars, one small and one suddenly enormous, are really the same war, and carry the same ironies.

Barenboim told me that to understand how peculiar the opera wars in Berlin had become, perhaps I should ask someone in Manchester whether *he* was "comfortable" with the idea of London—whether he thought of London as his capital and of its museums, libraries, and opera houses as belonging to him. He said that right now Americans and Russians felt more at home in Berlin than some Germans felt about even the idea of Berlin. Michael Naumann, who was Germany's Minister of Culture until late last year (he now runs the weekly *Die Zeit*), had offered to take over the Berlin Philharmonic as a national orchestra, and the city reacted as if he were Goebbels moving in. He never offered again. When I asked Naumann what chance there was of his successor's solving the city's opera wars by adopting one of the opera companies and making *it* national, he looked at me, laughing, and said, "Which company?" He could have said, "Which Germany?" ♦



HONEY PIE

BY HARUKI MURAKAMI

"So Masakichi got his paws full of honey—way more honey than he could eat by himself—and he put it in a pail, and do-o-own the mountain he went, all the way to the town, to sell his honey. Masakichi was the all-time No. 1 honey bear."

"Do bears have pails?" Sala asked.

"Masakichi just happened to have one," Junpei explained. "He found it lying by the road, and he figured it would come in handy sometime."

"And it did."

"It really did. So Masakichi went to the town and found a spot for himself in the square. He put up a sign: 'Deeelicious Honey. All Natural. One Cup ¥200.'"

"Can bears count money?"

"Absolutely. Masakichi lived with people when he was just a cub, and they taught him how to talk and how to count money. Masakichi was a very special bear. And so the other bears, who weren't so special, tended to shun him."

"Shun him?"

"Yeah, they'd go, like, 'Hey, what's with this guy, acting so special?' and keep away from him. Especially Tonkichi, the tough guy. He really hated Masakichi."

"Poor Masakichi!"

"Yeah, really. Meanwhile, the people would say, 'O.K., he knows how to count, and he can talk and all, but when you get right down to it he's just a bear.' So Masakichi didn't really belong to either world—the bear world or the people world."

"Didn't he have any friends?"

"Not a single friend. Bears don't go to school, you know, so there's no place for them to make friends."

"Do you have friends, Jun?" "Uncle Junpei" was too long for her, so Sala just called him Jun.

"Your daddy is my absolute bestest friend from a long, long time ago. And so's your mommy."

"That's good, to have friends."

"It is good," Junpei said. "You're right about that."

Junpei often made up stories for Sala before she went to bed. And whenever she didn't understand something she would ask him to explain. Junpei gave a lot of thought to his answers. Sala's questions were often sharp and interesting, and while he was thinking about them he could also come up with new twists to the story he was telling.

Sayoko brought a glass of warm milk.

"Junpei is telling me the story of Masakichi the bear," Sala said. "He's the all-time No. 1 honey bear, but he doesn't have any friends."

"Oh, really? Is he a big bear?" Sayoko asked.

Sala turned to Junpei with an uneasy stare. "Is Masakichi big?"

"Not so big," Junpei said. "In fact, he's kind of on the small side. For a bear. He's just about your size, Sala. And he's a very sweet-tempered little guy. When he listens to music, he doesn't listen to rock or punk or that kind of stuff. He likes to listen to Schubert, all by himself."

"He listens to music?" Sala asked. "Does he have a CD player or something?"

"He found a boom box lying on the ground one day. He picked it up and brought it home."

"How come all this stuff just happens to be lying around in the mountains?" Sala asked with a note of suspicion.

"Well, it's a very, very steep mountain, and the hikers get all faint and dizzy, and they throw away tons of stuff they don't need. Right there by the road, like, 'Oh, man, this pack is so heavy, I feel like I'm gonna die! I don't need this pail anymore. I don't need this boom box anymore.'"

"I know just how they feel," Sayoko said. "Sometimes you want to throw everything away."

"Not me," Sala said.

"That's because you're young and full

of energy, Sala," Junpei said. "Hurry and drink your milk so I can tell you the rest of the story."

"O.K.," she said, wrapping her hands around the glass and drinking the warm milk with great care. Then she asked, "How come Masakichi doesn't make honey pies and sell them? I think the people in the town would like that better than just plain honey."

"An excellent point," Sayoko said with a smile. "His profits would be much greater that way."

"Plowing up new markets through value added," Junpei said. "This girl will be a real entrepreneur someday."

It was almost 2 A.M. by the time Sala went back to bed. Junpei and Sayoko waited for her to fall asleep, then went to split a can of beer at the kitchen table. Sayoko wasn't much of a drinker, and Junpei had to drive home.

"Sorry for dragging you out in the middle of the night," Sayoko said, "but I didn't know what else to do. I'm totally exhausted, and you're the only one who can calm her down. There was no way I was going to call Takatsuki."

Junpei nodded and took a swig of beer. "Don't worry about me," he said. "I'm awake till the sun comes up, and the roads are empty at this time of night. It's no big deal."

"You were working on a story?"

Junpei nodded.

"How's it going?"

"Like always. I write 'em. They print 'em. Nobody reads 'em."

"I read them. All of them."

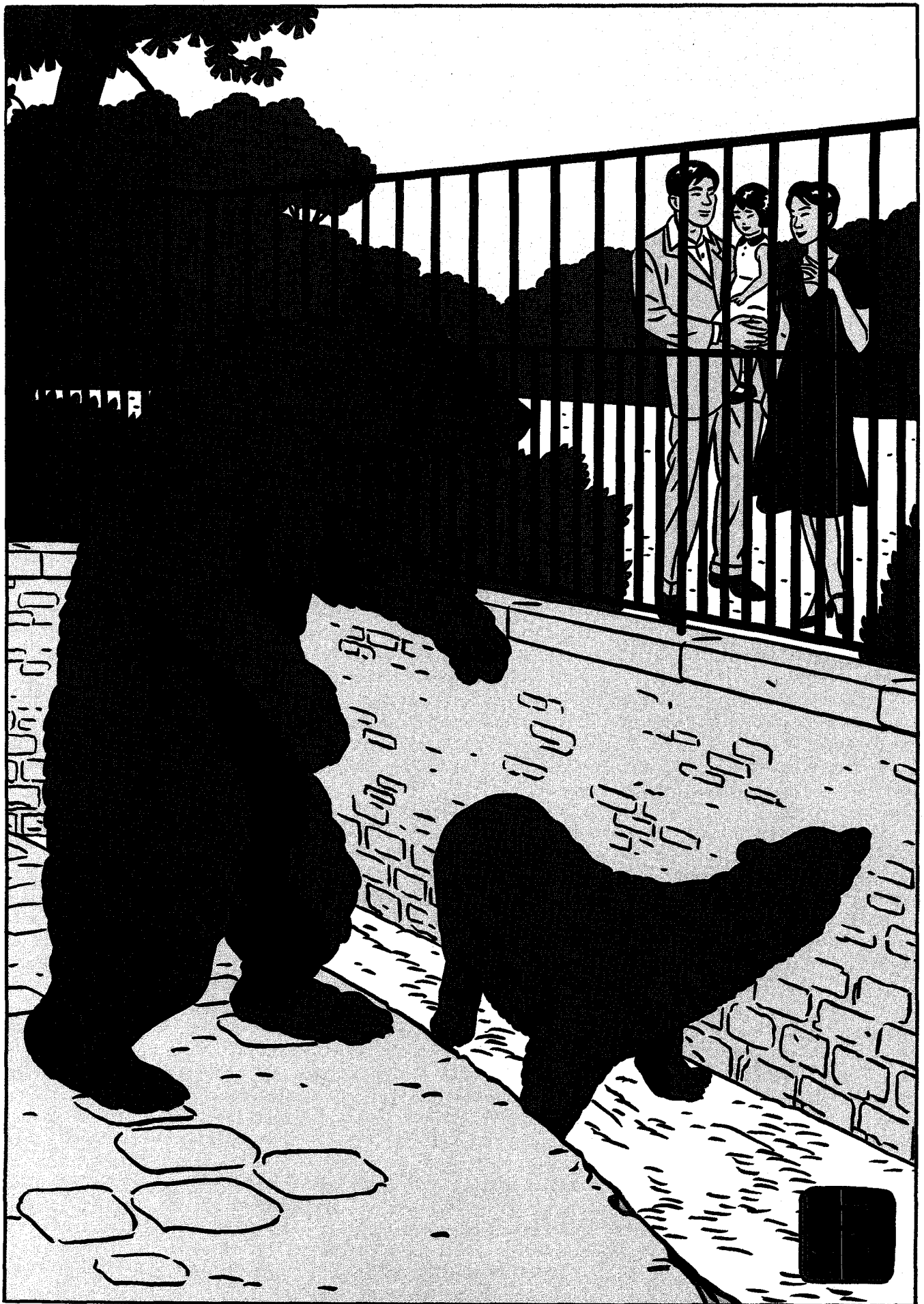
"Thanks. You're a nice person," Junpei said. "But the short story is on its way out. Like the slide rule. Let's talk about Sala. Has she done this before?"

Sayoko nodded.

"A lot?"

"Almost every night. Sometime after midnight, she gets these hysterical fits and jumps out of bed. And I can't get

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her to stop crying. I've tried everything."

"Any idea what's wrong?"

Sayoko drank what was left of her beer and stared at the empty glass.

"I think she saw too many news reports on the earthquake. It was too much for a four-year-old. She wakes up at around the time of the quake. She says a man woke her up, somebody she doesn't know. The Earthquake Man. He tries to put her in a little box—too little for anyone to fit into. She tells him she doesn't want to get inside, and he starts pushing her—so hard her joints crack—and he tries to stuff her inside. That's when she screams and wakes up."

"The Earthquake Man?"

"He's tall and skinny and old. After she's had the dream, she goes around turning on every light in the house and looking for him: in the closets, in the shoe cupboard in the front hall, under the beds, in all the dresser drawers. I tell her it was just a dream, but she won't listen to me. And she won't go to bed until she's looked everywhere he could possibly hide. That takes at least an hour, by which time I'm wide awake. I'm so sleep-deprived I can hardly stand up, let alone work."

Sayoko almost never spilled out her feelings like this.

"Try not to watch the news," Junpei said. "The earthquake's all they're showing these days."

"I almost never watch TV anymore. But it's too late now. The Earthquake Man keeps coming."

Junpei thought for a while.

"What do you say we go to the zoo on Sunday? Sala says she wants to see a real bear."

Sayoko narrowed her eyes and looked at him. "Not bad. It just might change her mood. Let's do it—the four of us. It's been ages. You call Takatsuki, O.K.?"

Junpei was thirty-six, born and bred in the city of Kobe, where his father owned a pair of jewelry stores. He had a sister six years his junior. After a year at a private cram school, he had enrolled at Waseda University, in Tokyo. He had passed the entrance exams in both the business and the literature departments. He chose the literature department without the slightest hesitation and told his parents that he had entered the business department. They would never have paid for him to study literature, and Jun-

pei had no intention of wasting four precious years studying the workings of the economy. All he wanted was to study literature, and then to become a writer.

At the university, Junpei made two friends, Takatsuki and Sayoko. Takatsuki came from the mountains of Nagano. Tall and broad-shouldered, he had been the captain of his high-school soccer team. It had taken him two years of studying to pass the entrance exam, so he was a year older than Junpei. Practical and decisive, he had the kind of looks that made people take to him right away, and he naturally assumed a leadership role in any group. But he had trouble reading books; he had entered the literature department because its exam was the only one he could pass. "What the hell," he said, in his positive way. "I'm going to be a newspaper reporter, so I'll let them teach me how to write."

Junpei did not understand why Takatsuki had any interest in befriending him. Junpei was the kind of person who liked to sit alone in his room reading books or listening to music, and he was terrible at sports. Awkward with strangers, he rarely made friends. Still, for whatever reason, Takatsuki seemed to have decided the first time he saw Junpei in class that he was going to make him a friend. He tapped Junpei on the shoulder and said, "Hey, let's get something to eat." And by the end of the day they had opened their hearts to each other.

Takatsuki used the same approach with Sayoko. Junpei was with Takatsuki when he tapped her on the shoulder and said, "Hey, what do you say the three of us go get something to eat?" And so their tight little group was born. Junpei, Takatsuki, and Sayoko did everything together. They shared lecture notes, ate lunch in the campus dining hall, talked about their future over coffee, took part-time jobs at the same place, went to late-night movies and rock concerts, walked all over Tokyo, and drank so much beer that they even got sick together. In other words, they behaved like first-year college students the world over.

Sayoko was a real Tokyo girl. She came from the old part of town, where the merchant class had lived for centuries, and her father ran a shop selling the exquisite little accessories that go with traditional Japanese dress. The business had been in the family for several generations,

and it attracted an exclusive clientele that included several famous Kabuki actors. Sayoko had plans to go on to graduate school in English literature, and ultimately to an academic career. She read a lot, and she and Junpei were constantly exchanging novels and having intense conversations about them. Sayoko had beautiful hair and intelligent eyes. She expressed herself quietly and with simple honesty, but deep down she had great strength. She was always casually dressed, without makeup, but she had a unique sense of humor, and her face would crinkle up mischievously whenever she made some funny remark. Junpei found that look of hers incredible. He had never fallen in love until he met Sayoko. He had attended a boys' high school and had had almost no opportunities to meet girls.

But Junpei couldn't bring himself to express his feelings to Sayoko. He knew that there would be no going back once the words were spoken, and that Sayoko might take herself off somewhere far beyond his reach. At the very least, the perfectly balanced, comfortable relationship between Junpei, Takatsuki, and Sayoko would undergo a shift. So Junpei told himself to leave things as they were for now and watch and wait.

In the end, Takatsuki was the first to make a move. "I hate to throw this at you out of the blue, but I'm in love with Sayoko," he told Junpei. "I hope you don't mind." This was midway through September of their second year. Takatsuki explained that he and Sayoko had become involved, almost by accident, while Junpei was at home for the summer vacation.

Junpei fixed his gaze on Takatsuki. It took him a few moments to understand what had happened, but when he did it sank into him like a lead weight. He no longer had any choice in the matter. "No," he said, "I don't mind."

"I am so glad to hear that!" Takatsuki said with a huge smile. "You were the only one I was worried about. I mean, the three of us had such a great thing going, it was kind of like I beat you out. But, anyway, Junpei, this had to happen sometime. If not now, it was bound to happen sooner or later. The main thing is that I want the three of us to go on being friends. O.K.?"

Junpei spent the next several days in a fog. He skipped classes and work. He lay on the floor of his one-room apartment,

eating nothing but the scraps in the refrigerator and slugging down whiskey whenever the impulse struck him. He thought about quitting university and going to some distant town where he knew no one and could spend the rest of his years doing manual labor. That would be the best life style for him, he decided.

On the fifth day of this, Sayoko came to Junpei's apartment. She was wearing a navy-blue sweatshirt and white cotton pants, and her hair was pinned back.

"Where have you been?" she asked. "Everybody's worried that you're dead in your room. Takatsuki asked me to check up on you. I guess he wasn't too keen on seeing the corpse himself."

Junpei said he had been feeling sick.

"Yeah," she said, "you've lost some weight, I think." She stared at him. "Want me to make you something to eat?"

Junpei shook his head. He didn't feel like eating, he said.

Sayoko opened the refrigerator and looked inside with a grimace. It held only two cans of beer, an old cucumber, and some baking soda. Sayoko sat down next to Junpei. "I don't know how to ask this, Junpei, but are you feeling bad about Takatsuki and me?"

Junpei said that he was not. And it was no lie. He was not feeling bad or angry. If, in fact, he was angry, it was at himself. For Takatsuki and Sayoko to become lovers was the most natural thing in the world. Takatsuki had all the qualifications. Junpei had none. It was that simple.

"Go halves on a beer?" Sayoko asked.

"Sure."

She took a can of beer from the refrigerator and divided the contents between two glasses, handing one to Junpei. They drank in silence, separately.

"It's kind of embarrassing to put this into words," she said, "but I want to stay friends with you, Junpei. Not just for now, but even after we get older. A lot older. I love Takatsuki, but I need you, too, in a whole different way. Does that make me selfish?"

Junpei was not sure how to answer that, but he shook his head.

Sayoko said, "To understand something and to put that something into a form that you can see with your own eyes are two completely different things. If you could manage to do both

equally well, living would be a lot simpler."

Junpei looked at Sayoko in profile. He had no idea what she was trying to say. Why does my brain always work so slowly? he wondered. He looked up, and for a long time his half-focussed eyes traced the shape of a stain on the ceiling. How would the situation have developed if he had confessed his love to Sayoko before Takatsuki had confessed his? To this Junpei could find no answer. All he knew for sure was that such a thing would never have happened.

He heard the sound of tears falling on the tatami, an oddly magnified sound. For a moment, he wondered if he was crying without being aware of it. But then he realized that Sayoko was the one who was crying. She had hung her head between her knees, and now, though she made no sound, her shoulders were trembling.

Almost unconsciously, he reached out and put a hand on her shoulder. Then he drew her gently toward him. She did not resist. He wrapped his arms around her and pressed his lips to hers. She closed her eyes and let her lips part. Junpei caught the scent of tears and drew breath from her mouth. He felt the softness of her breasts against him. Inside, he felt some kind of switching of places. He even heard the sound it made—like joints creaking. But that was all. As if regaining

consciousness, Sayoko moved her face back and down, pushing Junpei away.

"No," she said quietly, shaking her head. "We can't do this. It's wrong."

Junpei apologized. Sayoko said nothing. They remained that way, in silence, for a long time. The sound of a radio came in through the open window. It was a popular song. Junpei was sure that he would remember it till the day he died. But, in fact, try as he might after that, he was never able to recall the title or the melody.

"You don't have to apologize," Sayoko said. "It's not your fault."

"I think I'm confused," Junpei said honestly.

Sayoko reached out and laid her hand on Junpei's. "Come back to school, O.K.? Tomorrow? I've never had a friend like you before. You give me so much. I hope you realize that."

"So much, but not enough," he said.

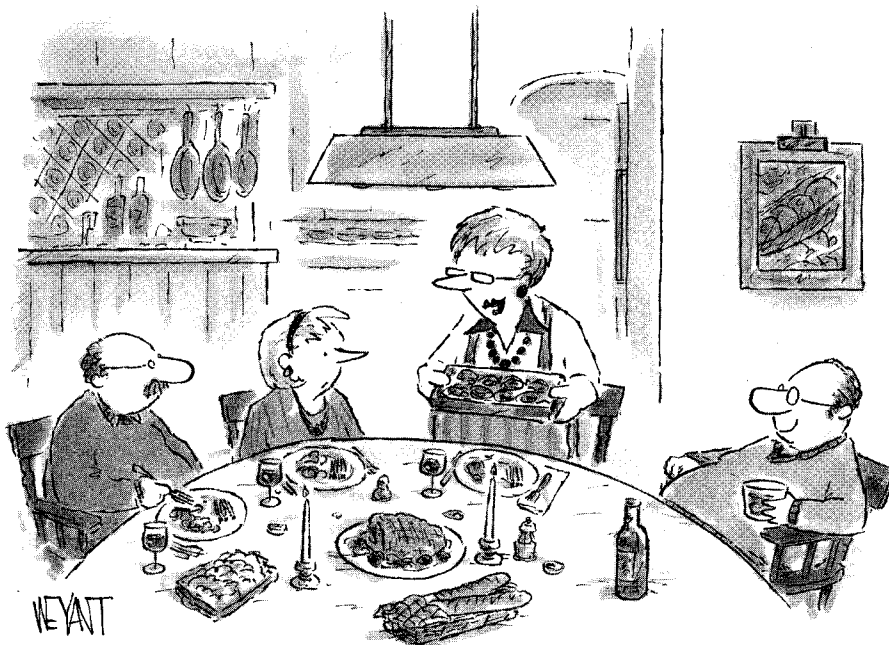
"That's not true," she said. "That is so not true."

Junpei went to his classes the next day, and the tight-knit threesome of Junpei, Takatsuki, and Sayoko continued through graduation. Junpei's short-lived desire to disappear disappeared itself. By holding her in his arms that day in his apartment and pressing his lips to hers,



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"Are these beautiful? I can't ever tell."



"Richard's not a foodie—he's a boozie."

Junpei had calmed something inside himself. At least he no longer felt confused. The decision had been made, even if he had not been the one to make it.

Sayoko sometimes introduced Junpei to a classmate of hers, and they would double-date. He saw a lot of one of the girls, and it was with her that he had sex for the first time, just before his twentieth birthday. But his heart was always somewhere else. He was respectful, kind, and tender to her, but never passionate or devoted. She eventually went elsewhere in search of true warmth. The same pattern repeated itself any number of times.

When he graduated, Junpei's parents discovered that he had been majoring in literature, not economics, and things turned ugly. His father wanted him to take over the family business, but Junpei had no intention of doing that. He wanted to stay in Tokyo and keep writing fiction. There was no room for compromise on either side, and a violent argument ensued. Words were spoken that should not have been. Junpei never saw his parents again, and he was convinced that it had to be that way. Unlike his sister, who always managed to compromise and get along with their parents, Junpei had done nothing but clash with them from the time he was a child.

Junpei took a series of part-time jobs

that helped him to scrape by as he continued to write fiction. Whenever he finished a story, he showed it to Sayoko and got her honest opinion, then revised it according to her suggestions. Until she pronounced a piece good, he would rewrite it again and again, carefully and patiently. He had no other mentor, and he belonged to no writers' group.

When he was twenty-four, a story of his won an award from a literary magazine, and over the next five years Junpei was nominated for the coveted Akutagawa Prize four times, but he never actually won it. He remained the eternally promising candidate. A typical opinion from a judge on the prize committee would say, "For such a young author, this is writing of very high quality, with remarkable examples of both plot and psychological analysis. But the author has a tendency to let sentiment take over from time to time, and the work lacks both freshness and novelistic sweep."

Takatsuki would laugh when he read such opinions. "These guys are out of their minds. What the hell is 'novelistic sweep'? Real people don't use words like that. 'Today's sukiyaki was lacking in beefistic sweep.' Ever hear anybody say anything like that?"

Junpei published two volumes of short stories before he turned thirty: "Horse in

the Rain" and "Grapes." "Horse in the Rain" sold ten thousand copies, "Grapes" twelve thousand. These were not bad figures for short-story collections, according to his editor. The reviews were generally favorable, but none gave his work passionate support. Most of Junpei's stories were about young people in situations of unrequited love. His style was lyrical, the plots rather old-fashioned. Readers of his generation were looking for a more inventive style and grittier plots. This was the age of video games and rap music, after all. Junpei's editor urged him to try a novel. If he never wrote anything but short stories, he would just keep dealing with the same material over and over again. Writing a novel could open up whole new worlds for a writer. As a practical matter, too, novels attracted far more attention than stories. Writing only short stories was a hard way to make a living.

But Junpei was a born short-story writer. He would shut himself in his room, let everything else go to hell, and turn out a first draft in three days of concentrated effort. After four more days of polishing, he would give the manuscript to Sayoko and his editor to read. Basically, though, the battle was won or lost in that first week. That was when everything that mattered in the story came together. His personality was suited to this way of working: total concentration of effort over a few short days. Junpei felt only exhaustion when he thought about writing a novel. How could he possibly maintain his concentration for months at a time? That kind of pacing eluded him.

Given his austere bachelor's life style, Junpei did not need much money. Once he had made what he needed for a given period, he would stop accepting work. He had only one silent cat to feed. His girlfriends were always the undemanding type, and when he grew bored with them he would come up with some pretext for ending the relationship. Sometimes, maybe once a month, he would wake at an odd time in the night with a feeling that was close to panic. I'm not going anywhere, he would tell himself. I can struggle all I want, but I'm never going to go anywhere. Then he would either force himself to go to his desk and write, or drink until he could no longer stay awake.

Takatsuki had landed the job he'd always wanted—reporting for a top news-

paper. Since he never studied, his grades at the university were nothing to brag about, but the impression he made at interviews was overwhelmingly positive, and he had basically been hired on the spot. Sayoko had entered graduate school, as planned. They married six months after graduation, the ceremony as cheerful and busy as Takatsuki himself. They honeymooned in France, and bought a two-room condo a short commute from downtown. Junpei would come over for dinner a couple of times a week, and the newlyweds always welcomed him warmly. It was almost as if they were more comfortable with Junpei around than when they were alone together.

Takatsuki enjoyed his work at the newspaper. He was assigned first to the city desk, which kept him running from one scene of tragedy to the next. "I can see a corpse now and not feel a thing," he said. Bodies dismembered by trains, charred in fires, discolored with age, the bloated cadavers of drowning victims, gunshot victims with their brains splattered. "Whatever distinguished one lump of flesh from another when they were alive, it's all the same once they're dead," he said. "Just used-up shells."

Takatsuki was sometimes too busy to make it home before morning. Then Sayoko would call Junpei. She knew that he was often up all night.

"Are you working? Can you talk?"

"Sure," he would say. "I'm not doing anything special."

They'd discuss the books they had read, or things that had come up in their daily lives. Then they'd talk about the old days, when they were still free and spontaneous. Conversations like that would inevitably bring back memories of the time that Junpei had held Sayoko in his arms: the smooth touch of her lips, the softness of her breasts against him, the transparent early-autumn sunlight streaming onto the tatami floor of his apartment—these were never far from his thoughts.

Just after she turned thirty, Sayoko became pregnant. She was a graduate assistant at the time, but she took a break from her job to give birth to a baby girl. The three of them came up with all kinds of names for the baby, but decided in the end on one of Junpei's suggestions—Sala. "I love the sound of

it," Sayoko told him. There were no complications with the birth, and that night Junpei and Takatsuki found themselves together without Sayoko for the first time in a long while. Junpei had brought over a bottle of single malt to celebrate, and they emptied it together at the kitchen table.

"Why does time shoot by like this?" Takatsuki asked with a depth of feeling that was rare for him. "It seems like only yesterday I was a freshman, and then I met you, and then I met Sayoko, and the next thing I know I'm a father. It's weird, like I'm watching a movie in fast-forward. You probably wouldn't understand, Junpei. You're still living the way you did in college. It's like you never stopped being a student, you lucky bastard."

"Not so lucky," Junpei said, but he knew how Takatsuki felt. Sayoko was a mother now. This was as big a shock for Junpei as it was for Takatsuki. The gears of life had moved ahead a notch with a loud *ker-chunk*, and Junpei knew that they would never turn back again. The one thing that he was not yet sure of was how he was supposed to feel about it.

"I couldn't tell you this before," Takatsuki said, "but I'm pretty sure Sayoko was more attracted to you than she was to me." He was drunk, but there was a more serious gleam in his eye than usual.

"That's crazy," Junpei said with a smile.

"Like hell it is. I know what I'm talking about. You know how to put words on a page, but you don't know shit about a woman's feelings. A drowned corpse does better than you. You had no idea how she felt about you, and I figured, what the hell, I was in love with her, and I had to have her. I still think she's the greatest woman in the world. I still think it was my right to have her."

"Nobody's saying it wasn't," Junpei said.

Takatsuki nodded. "But you *still* don't get it. Not really. When it comes to anything halfway important, you're so damn

stupid. It's amazing to me that you can put a piece of fiction together."

"Yeah, well, that's a different thing."

"Anyhow, now there are four of us," Takatsuki said with a sigh. "Four of us. Four. Is that O.K.?"

Junpei learned just before Sala's second birthday that Takatsuki and Sayoko were on the verge of breaking up. Sayoko seemed apologetic when she broke the news to him. Takatsuki had had a lover since the time of Sayoko's pregnancy, and he hardly ever came home anymore, she explained.

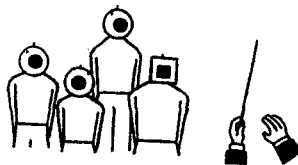
Junpei couldn't seem to grasp what he was hearing, no matter how many details Sayoko was able to give him. Why would Takatsuki have wanted another woman? He had declared Sayoko to be the greatest woman in the world the night that Sala was born, and he had meant it. Besides, he was crazy about Sala. "I mean, I'm over at your house all the time, eating dinner with you guys, right? But I never sensed a thing. You were happiness itself—the perfect family."

"It's true," Sayoko said. "We weren't lying to you or putting on an act. But quite separately from that he got himself a girlfriend, and we can never go back to what we had. So we decided to split up. Don't let it bother you too much. I'm sure things will work out better now, in a lot of different ways."

Sayoko and Takatsuki were divorced some months later. They reached an agreement without the slightest problem: no recriminations, no disputed claims. Takatsuki went to live with his girlfriend; he came to visit Sala once a week, and they all agreed that Junpei would try to be present at those times. "It would make things easier for both of us," Sayoko told Junpei. He felt as if he had suddenly grown much older, though he had only just turned thirty-three.

Whenever they got together, Takatsuki was his usual talkative self, and Sayoko's behavior was perfectly natural, as though nothing had happened. If anything, she seemed even more natural than before, in Junpei's eyes. Sala had no idea that her parents were divorced. And Junpei played his assigned role perfectly. The three joked around as always and talked about the old days.

"Hey, Junpei, tell me," Takatsuki said, one January night when the two of them



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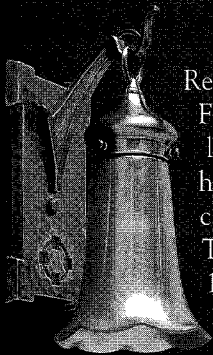
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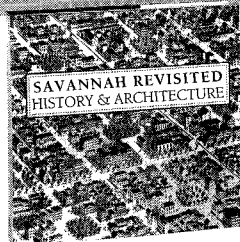
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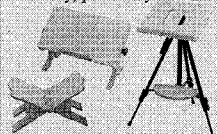
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were walking home, their breath white in the chill air. "Do you have somebody you're planning to marry?"

"Not at the moment," Junpei said.

"No girlfriend?"

"Nope."

"What do you say you and Sayoko get together?"

Junpei squinted at Takatsuki as if at some too bright object. "Why?" he asked.

"What do you mean, 'why'? It's so obvious! If nothing else, you're the only man I'd want to be a father to Sala."

"Is that the only reason you think I should marry Sayoko?"

Takatsuki sighed and draped his thick arm around Junpei's shoulders.

"What's the matter? Don't you like the idea of marrying Sayoko? Or is it the thought of stepping in after me?"

"That doesn't bother me. I just wonder if you can make this like some kind of deal. It's a question of decency."

"This is no deal," Takatsuki said. "And it's got nothing to do with decency. You love Sayoko, right? You love Sala, too, don't you? That's the most important thing. I know you've got your own hangups. Fine. I grant you that. But to me it looks like you're trying to pull off your shorts without taking off your pants."

Junpei said nothing, and Takatsuki went into an unusually long silence. Shoulder to shoulder, they walked down the road to the station, heaving white breath into the night.

"In any case," Junpei said, "you're an absolute idiot."

"I have to give you credit," Takatsuki said. "You're right on the mark. I don't deny it. I'm ruining my own life. But I'm telling you, Junpei, I couldn't help it. There was no way I could put a stop to it. I don't know any better than you do why it had to happen. It just happened. And, if not here and now, something like it would have happened sooner or later."

Junpei felt as if he had heard the same speech before. "Do you remember what you said to me the night that Sala was born? That Sayoko was the greatest woman in the world, that you could never find anyone to take her place."

"And it's still true. Nothing has changed where that's concerned. But that very fact can sometimes make things go bad."

"I don't know what you mean by that," Junpei said.

"And you never will," Takatsuki said with a shake of the head. He always had the last word.

Two years went by. Sayoko never went back to teaching. Junpei got an editor friend of his to send her a story to translate, and she carried the job off with a certain flair. The editor was impressed enough to give her a substantial new piece the following month. The pay was not very good, but it added to what Takatsuki was sending and helped Sayoko and Sala to live comfortably.

They all went on meeting at least once a week, as they always had. Whenever urgent business kept Takatsuki away, Sayoko, Junpei, and Sala would eat together. The table was quiet without Takatsuki, and the conversation turned to oddly mundane matters. A stranger would have assumed that the three of them were just a typical family.

Junpei went on writing a steady stream of stories, bringing out his fourth collection, "Silent Moon," when he was thirty-five. It received one of the prizes reserved for established writers, and the title story was made into a movie. Junpei also produced a volume of music criticism, wrote a book on ornamental gardening, and translated a collection of John Updike's short stories. All were well received. Securing his position as a writer little by little, he had developed a steady readership and a stable income.

He continued to think seriously about asking Sayoko to marry him. On more than one occasion, he kept himself awake all night thinking about it, and for a time he was unable to work. But still he could not make up his mind. The more he thought about it, the more it seemed to him that his relationship with Sayoko had been consistently choreographed by others. His position was always passive. Takatsuki was the one who had picked the two of them out of his class and created the threesome. Then he had taken Sayoko, married her, made a child with her, and divorced her. And now Takatsuki was the one who was urging Junpei to marry her. Junpei loved Sayoko, of course. About that there was no question. And now was the perfect time for him to be united with her. She probably wouldn't turn him down. But Junpei

couldn't help thinking that things were just a bit too easy. What was there left for *him* to decide? And so he went on wondering. And not deciding. And then the earthquake came.

Junpei was in Barcelona at the time, doing a story for an airline magazine. He returned to his hotel in the evening to find the TV news filled with images of collapsed buildings and black clouds of smoke. It looked like the aftermath of an air raid. Because the announcer was speaking in Spanish, it took Junpei a while to realize what city he was looking at. "You're from Kobe, aren't you?" his photographer asked.

But Junpei did not try to call his parents. The rift was too deep, and had gone on too long for there to be any hope of reconciliation. Junpei flew back to Tokyo and resumed his normal life there. He never turned on the television, and hardly looked at a newspaper. Whenever the subject of the earthquake came up, he would clamp his mouth shut. It was an echo from a past that he had buried long ago. He hadn't set foot on those streets since his graduation, but still the catastrophe laid bare wounds that were hidden somewhere deep inside him. It seemed to change certain aspects of his life—quietly, but completely. Junpei felt an entirely new sense of isolation. I have no roots, he thought. I'm not connected to anything.

Early on the Sunday morning that they had all planned to take Sala to the zoo to see the bears, Takatsuki called to say that he had to fly to Okinawa. He had managed at last to pry the promise of a one-on-one interview out of the governor. "Sorry, but you'll have to go to the zoo without me. I don't suppose Mr. Bear will be too upset if I don't make it."

So Junpei and Sayoko took Sala to the Ueno Zoo. Junpei held Sala in his arms and showed her the bears. She pointed to the biggest, blackest bear and asked, "Is that one Masakichi?"

"No, no, that's not Masakichi," Junpei said. "Masakichi is smaller than that, and he's smarter-looking, too. That's the tough guy, Tonkichi."

"Tonkichi!" Sala yelled again and again, but the bear paid no attention. Then she looked at Junpei and said, "Tell me a story about Tonkichi."

"That's a hard one," Junpei said. "There aren't that many interesting stories about Tonkichi. He's just an ordinary bear. He can't talk or count money like Masakichi."

"But I bet you can tell me *something* good about him. One thing."

"You're absolutely right," Junpei said. "There's at least one good thing to tell about even the most ordinary bear. Oh, yeah, I almost forgot. Well, Tonkichi—"

"Tonkichi!" Sala corrected him with a touch of impatience.

"Ah, yes, sorry. Well, Tonkichi had one thing he could do really well, and that was catching salmon. He'd go to the river and crouch down behind a boulder and *snap!*—he would grab himself a salmon. You have to be really fast to do something like that. Tonkichi was not the brightest bear on the mountain, but he sure could catch more salmon than any of the other bears. More than he could ever hope to eat. But he couldn't go to town to sell his extra salmon, because he didn't know how to talk."

"That's easy," Sala said. "All he had to do was trade his extra salmon for Masakichi's extra honey."

"You're right," Junpei said. "And that's what Tonkichi decided to do. So Tonkichi and Masakichi started trading salmon for honey, and before long they got to know each other really well. Tonkichi realized that Masakichi was not such a stuck-up bear after all, and Masakichi realized that Tonkichi was not just a tough guy. Before they knew it, they were best friends. Tonkichi worked hard at catching salmon, and Masakichi worked hard at collecting honey. But then one day, like a bolt from the blue, the salmon disappeared from the river."

"A bolt from the blue?"

"Like a flash of lightning from a clear blue sky," Sayoko explained. "All of a sudden, without warning."

"All of a sudden the salmon disappeared?" Sala asked, with a sombre expression. "But why?"

"Well, all the salmon in the world got together and decided they weren't going to swim up that river anymore, because a bear named Tonkichi was there, and

he was so good at catching salmon. Tonkichi never caught another decent salmon after that. The best he could do was catch an occasional skinny salmon and eat it, but the worst-tasting thing you could ever want to eat is a skinny salmon."

"Poor Tonkichi!" Sala said.

"And that's how Tonkichi ended up being sent to the zoo?" Sayoko asked.

"Well, that's a long, long story," Junpei said, clearing his throat. "But, basically, yes, that's what happened."

"Didn't Masakichi help Tonkichi?" Sala asked.

"He tried. They were best friends, after all. That's what friends are for. Masakichi shared his honey with Tonkichi—for free! But Tonkichi said, 'I can't let you do that. It'd be like taking advantage of you.' Masakichi said, 'You don't have to be such a stranger with me, Tonkichi. If I were in your position, you'd do the same thing for me, I'm sure. You would, wouldn't you?'"

"Sure he would," Sala said.

"But things didn't stay that way between them for long," Sayoko interjected.

"Things didn't stay that way between them for long," Junpei said. "Tonkichi told Masakichi, 'We're supposed to be friends. It's not right for one friend to do all the giving and the other to do all the taking: that's not real friendship. I'm leaving this mountain now, Masakichi, and I'll try my luck somewhere else. And if you and I meet up again somewhere, we will still be best friends.' So they shook hands and parted. But after Tonkichi came down from the mountain, he didn't know enough to be careful in the outside world, so a hunter caught him in a trap. That was the end of Tonkichi's freedom. They sent him to the zoo."

"Couldn't you have come up with a better ending? Like, everybody lives happily ever after?" Sayoko asked Junpei later.

"I haven't thought of one yet."

The three of them had dinner together, as usual, in Sayoko's apartment. Sayoko boiled a pot of spaghetti and defrosted some tomato sauce while Junpei made a salad of green beans and onions. They opened a bottle of red wine and poured Sala a glass of orange juice. When they had finished eating, and cleaning the kitchen, Junpei read to



Sala from a picture book, but when bedtime came she resisted.

"Please, Mama, do the bra trick," she begged.

Sayoko blushed. "Not *now*," she said. "We have a *guest*."

"No, we don't," Sala said. "Junpei's not a guest."

"What's this all about?" Junpei asked.

"It's just a silly game," Sayoko said.

"Mama takes her bra off under her clothes, puts it on the table, and puts it back on again. She has to keep one hand on the table. And we time her. She's great!"

"Sala!" Sayoko growled, shaking her head. "It's just a little game we play at home. It's not meant for anybody else."

"Sounds like fun to me," Junpei said.

"Please, Mama, show Junpei! Just once. If you do it, I'll go to bed right away."

"Oh, what's the use," Sayoko muttered. She took off her digital watch and handed it to Sala. "Now, you're not going to give me any more trouble about going to bed, right? O.K., get ready to time me when I count to three."

Sayoko was wearing a baggy black crewneck sweater. She put both hands on the table and counted, "One . . . two . . . three!" Like a turtle's head retracting into its shell, her right hand disappeared up her sleeve, and then there was a light back-scratching kind of movement. Out came the right hand again, and the left hand went up its sleeve. Sayoko turned her head just a bit, and the left hand came out holding a white bra—a small one, with no wires. Without the slightest wasted motion, the hand and bra went back up the sleeve, and the hand came out again. Then the right hand pulled in, poked around at the back, and came out again. The end. Sayoko rested her right hand on her left on the table.

"Twenty-five seconds," Sala said. "That's great, Mama, a new record! Your best time so far was thirty-six seconds."

Junpei applauded. "Wonderful! Like magic."

Sala clapped her hands, too. Sayoko stood up and announced, "All right, show time is over. To bed, young lady. You promised."

Sala kissed Junpei on the cheek and went to bed.

Sayoko stayed with her until her breathing was deep and steady, then

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Does anyone give a shit? Not I, said the little brown mouse.
And so to bed, said Mother,
but no one was listening.
Praise the Lord, said the radio,
the radio said Praise the Lord
again, and the television
turned its back on the room.

Turnips for wisdom, eggplant
for beauty, parsnips for ease,
cabbage for size, a raw egg
for the hair, a slice of ham
to seize the hips, for the nose
foxtail and salt, for grace
ice-cold water poured from
way high up to way down low.

Everyone sits at the big table
in the dark. The empty plates
moon, the silverware stars,
the napkins scrub their hands.
I'm home, says the front door.
The windows are deep in thought,
the roof has taken off its hat.
Nothing to do, chants the toilet.

—Philip Levine

joined Junpei on the sofa. "I have a confession to make," she said. "I cheated."

"Cheated?"

"I didn't put the bra back on. I just pretended. I slipped it out from under my sweater and dropped it on the floor."

Junpei laughed. "What a terrible mother!"

"I wanted to make a new record," she said, narrowing her eyes with a smile. He hadn't seen her smile in that simple, mischievous way for a long time. Time wobbled on its axis inside Junpei, like curtains stirring in a breeze. He reached for Sayoko's shoulder, and her hand took his. They came together on the sofa in a strong embrace. With complete naturalness, they wrapped their arms around each other and kissed. It was as if nothing had changed since the time they were nineteen.

"We should have been like this to begin with," Sayoko whispered after they had moved from the sofa to her bed. "But you didn't get it. You just didn't get it. Not

till the salmon disappeared from the river."

They took their clothes off and held each other gently. Their hands groped clumsily, as if they were both having sex for the first time. They took their time, until they knew they were ready, and then at last Junpei entered Sayoko and she drew him in.

None of this seemed real to Junpei. In the half-light, he felt as if he were crossing a deserted bridge that went on and on forever. He moved, and she moved with him. Again and again, he wanted to come, but he held himself back, fearing that, once it happened, the dream would end and everything would vanish.

Then, behind him, he heard a slight creaking sound. The bedroom door was easing open. The light from the hallway took the shape of the door and fell on the rumpled bedclothes. Junpei raised himself and turned to see Sala standing against the light. Sayoko held her breath and moved her hips away, pulling Junpei

out. Gathering the sheet to her breasts, she used one hand to straighten the hair on her forehead.

Sala was not crying or screaming. Her right hand gripping the doorknob, she just stood there, looking at the two of them but seeing nothing. Her eyes were focussed on emptiness.

Sayoko called her name.

"The man said to come here," Sala said in a flat voice, like someone who has just been ripped out of a dream.

"The man?" Sayoko asked.

"The Earthquake Man. He came and woke me up. He told me to tell you. He said he has the box ready for everybody. He said he's waiting with the lid open. He said I should tell you that, and you would understand."

Sala slept in Sayoko's bed that night. Junpei stretched out on the living-room sofa with a blanket, but he could not sleep. The TV faced the sofa, and for a very long time he stared at the dead screen. Junpei knew that *they* were inside there. They were waiting with the box open. Junpei felt a chill run up his spine, and, no matter how long he waited, it did not go away.

He gave up trying to sleep and went to the kitchen. He made himself some coffee and sat at the kitchen table to drink it, but he felt something bunched up under one foot. It was Sayoko's bra, still lying there. He picked it up and hung it on the back of a chair. It was a simple, white piece of underwear, devoid of decoration. It hung on the kitchen chair in the predawn darkness like some anonymous witness who had wandered in from a time long past.

Junpei thought about his early days in college. He could still hear Takatsuki the first time they met, saying, "Hey, let's get something to eat," in that warm way of his, and he could see Takatsuki's friendly smile that seemed to say, "Relax. The world is just going to keep getting better and better." Where did we eat that time, Junpei wondered, and what did we have? He couldn't remember, though he was sure it was nothing special.

"Why did you choose me to go to lunch with?" Junpei had asked him that day. Takatsuki tapped his own temple with complete confidence. "I have a talent for picking the right friends at the right times in the right places."

And Takatsuki had not been wrong, Junpei thought, setting his coffee mug on the kitchen table. He *did* have an in-

tuitive knack for picking the right friends. But that was not enough. Finding one person to love over the long haul of life was quite a different matter from finding friends. Junpei closed his eyes and thought about the stretch of time he had passed through. He did not want to think of it as something he had merely used up without any purpose.

As soon as Sayoko woke in the morning, he would ask her to marry him, Junpei decided. He was sure now. He couldn't waste another minute. Taking care not to make a sound, he opened the bedroom door and looked at Sayoko and Sala sleeping bundled in a comforter. Sala lay with her back to Sayoko, whose arm was draped on Sala's shoulder. Junpei touched Sayoko's hair where it fell across the pillow, and caressed Sala's small, pink cheek with the tip of his finger. Neither of them stirred. He eased himself down to the carpeted floor by the bed, his back against the wall, to watch over them in their sleep.

Eyes fixed on the hands of the clock, Junpei thought about the rest of the story for Sala. He had to find a way to end the tale of Masakichi and Tonkichi. There had to be a way to save Tonkichi from the zoo. Junpei retraced the story from the beginning. Before long, an idea began to sprout in his head, and, little by little, it took shape.

Tonkichi had the same thought as Sala: he would use the honey that Masakichi had collected to bake honey pies. It didn't take him long to realize that he had a real talent for making crisp, delicious honey pies. Masakichi took the honey pies to town and sold them to the people there. The people loved Tonkichi's honey pies and bought them by the dozen. So Tonkichi and Masakichi never had to separate again: they lived happily ever after in the mountains.

Sala would be sure to love the new ending. And so would Sayoko. I want to write stories that are different from the ones I've written so far, Junpei thought. I want to write about people who dream and wait for the night to end, who long for the light so that they can hold the ones they love. But right now I have to stay here and keep watch over this woman and this girl. I will never let anyone—not anyone—try to put them into that crazy box, not even if the sky should fall or the earth crack open with a roar. ♦

(Translated, from the Japanese, by Jay Rubin.)

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But we sit many, many times.



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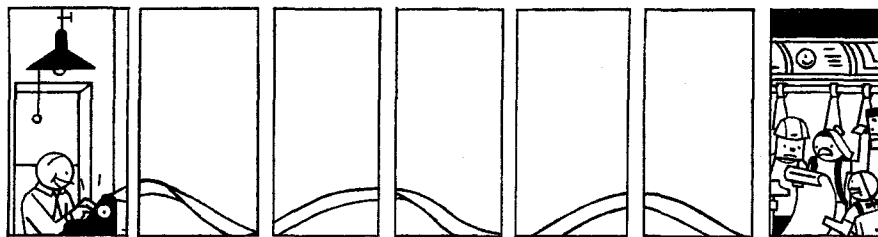
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THE CRITICS



JAZZ

BIG BEN

Once upon a time, Ben Webster was the king of tenor saxophonists.

BY WHITNEY BALLIETT

Aside from memories, all that remains of the unique and magisterial tenor saxophonist Ben Webster, who died in 1973, in Amsterdam, is his plain gravestone in Copenhagen ("Ben Webster 1909-1973"), where he lived during his last years; Ol Betsy, the so-christened tenor that he bought in 1938 and used the rest of his life (he left deathbed instructions that Ol Betsy was never to be played again, and it now resides at the Institute of Jazz Studies, at Rutgers); assorted CDs and a new, revivifying Mosaic reissue, "The Complete Verve Johnny Hodges Small Group Sessions 1956-1961," which includes ninety-five tracks, half of which Webster, then at his peak, sits in on; and Webster's first biography, "Ben Webster: His Life and Music" (Berkeley Hills), a scattershot but valuable effort by the Dutch writer Jeroen de Valk.

In 1964, Webster, who had never been to Europe, was offered a month-long gig at Ronnie Scott's club in London. He went, and he never came back, thus joining the dozens of black American jazz musicians who immigrated to Europe in the fifties and sixties. His life had all but dried up here. In 1963, his mother, Mayme, and his great-aunt Agnes Johnson, both beloved, had died in their nineties. They had reared him in Kansas City, where he was born, and had always taken him in when he needed to go home and retrench. (He was married once, briefly, in the forties.) And it had become increasingly

difficult to find work. (So much so that in the early sixties he appeared at the Metropole, on Seventh Avenue, with a hybrid group that included Pee Wee Russell, Buck Clayton, J. C. Higginbotham, and Bud Freeman.) Caught between the Beatles on the right and the jazz avant-garde of Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane on the left, Webster had slipped totally out of fashion. There has long been a disturbing tendency among jazz aficionados to regard each innovation in the music as "progress," a practice that sends the musicians who have supposedly been supplanted into the outer darkness.

When Webster arrived abroad, he discovered almost immediately that he was relished not only in England but in Sweden and Norway and Denmark and Holland, and in due course he settled in Amsterdam, where he was coddled by his landlady, a Mrs. Hartlooper. (Mayme and Agnes Johnson had spoiled Webster so completely that he could not function properly without some sort of loving caretaker.) In 1969, he moved to Copenhagen, where he was shepherded by a nurse, Birgit Nordtorp. He worked almost steadily, but his drinking, which had begun to accelerate in the forties, was getting in the way. Like Bob and Ray's Captain Wolf Larsen, who was an angel when he was sober and kicked his passengers down the galley stairs when he was drunk, Webster, normally as sweet as cream, became so fractious

when he was drunk that he had long been known among American musicians as "the Brute." The pianist Jimmy Rowles loved Webster, and said after his death, "Benny Carter was the only man he'd listen to when he was like that. . . . Ben used to say of Carter, 'There's a man who can bake a cake as light as a feather and whip any man.'" Rowles also knew the good Webster. They hung out in the fifties, when they lived and worked on the West Coast, and sometimes they played golf. "We'd tee up," Rowles said, "and all these fancy types would be waiting their turn, mumbling under their breath about that big black guy who was holding them up. Ben would have one of his little hats on the back of his head, and he'd stand before the ball, his big front sticking out, and talk to himself: 'Now, Ben, do it just like when you were in the Masters. Keep your head down, and not too many Wheaties.' And he'd take a terrific swing—*pouf!*—and the ball would dribble ten feet. We only saw each other on the tees and greens, but we laughed our way around the whole course."

For all his idiosyncrasies, Webster was a meticulous musician, and he soon discovered a musical problem in Europe that had never existed at home: many of the best European musicians he played with tended to be amateurish; instead of supporting him, they ended up in his wake. These problems eventually aggravated his drinking, and he began showing up at concerts and clubs dead drunk, or missing important engagements altogether. Webster had broad shoulders, a fine beaked nose, and imperious flanking bags under his eyes, and he radiated a powerful handsomeness. But in his last years he gained an enormous amount of weight; his legs gave out and he used a cane, and his playing became halting and even incoherent. Yet he never lost his sweetness. De Valk quotes a young tenor saxophonist, Jesper Thilo: "He lived alone, and he really liked it when someone came by. I went over to his flat a lot. We'd have a beer or something stronger, and talk about music. . . . I think he wanted the same role for himself that Coleman Hawkins had in New York. He wanted to

RICHARD MERKIN



Webster's ballads were intimate and cajoling, but never sentimental; everything tightened when he played the blues.

help me with things he knew a lot about, like tone formation. He taught me a lot about embouchure, about how to develop a good sound."

Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, and Ben Webster were the founding emperors of the jazz tenor saxophone. Hawkins more or less invented the instrument, Young reinvented it tonally and melodically (Hawkins sped through the chords, while Young floated above), and Webster developed an enormous lyrical sound and swinging directness—an easy, embracing quality—that touched you in a way that Hawkins and Young, for all their genius, rarely did. Webster had rummaged around in Hawkins's style for most of the thirties. Then, in 1940, he joined Duke Ellington and fell under the sway of the magical Johnny Hodges, who by example taught him about tone and emotion, about how to trap his listeners. When he left Ellington, in 1943, and joined Sid Catlett on Fifty-second Street, he had perfected his huge style.

It came in three speeds. He seemed to breathe rather than play his slow ballads; he'd start phrases with a whispering breath that would grow majestically into a full tone, then gradually melt back into breath—a kind of aural appearing-and-disappearing act. Webster's ballads were intimate and cajoling, but never sentimental. Everything tightened when he played the blues. The breathiness vanished, and his phrases became short and hard; he preached and badgered. His ballads insinuated, but his slow blues were in your face. Webster swung irresistibly in medium tempos. His blues moved at a run, and if he played a thirty-two-bar song he would alter the melody discreetly in the first chorus, then elbow the melody aside, replacing it with pure blocks of sound. Fast tempos sometimes got away from him. He'd coast through his first chorus and, either angry or perhaps hungover, start growling, an abrasive sound that would finally end a chorus or two later with a shuddering, out-of-my-way tremolo. But sometimes this abrasiveness worked, as in Webster's celebrated

roaring solo on Ellington's "Cotton Tail." In the late forties, with Webster sailing along, jazz was struck by a cataclysm it still suffers from. Art Tatum and Charlie Parker began flooding the music with sixteenth notes and cascading, glissandolike runs and arpeggios, and they turned jazz into a baroque music. Webster became one of the last non-rococo players, a champion of quarter notes and whole notes. But the thousand-notes-a-chorus musicians who eventually surrounded him made his rich, wasteless lyricism sound monumental.

For whatever reason, most of Webster's music on the Mosaic album is blues of various speeds. Many of them are classics, in particular the five blues recorded in April of 1958 with Roy Eldridge, Vic Dickenson, Hodges, Billy Strayhorn (whose accompaniment is spiky and rueful), and Sam Woodyard, and the four blues set down by almost the same group several months later. "Not So Dukish" and "Preacher Blues," done in September of 1958 with an Ellington contingent, takes the blues even further down. Best of all, though, are the dozen lightsome, loving numbers that Hodges and Webster, the Master and the Disciple, recorded with a rhythm section in 1960, among them "Dual Highway," "Ifida," and "I'd Be There"—three instances of the secret language that jazz musicians often speak. Six of the Hodges-Webster duets have never been released before.

Webster, clean and sober, appears in a photograph in de Valk's biography, and Webster, drunk, appears in a picture in the Mosaic album booklet. The first photo from the biography, taken in 1968 in Amsterdam, shows Webster sitting on a beautiful bike, his left foot resting on the sidewalk. He is gesticulating with his left hand and talking to someone, and he is dressed elegantly in a dark tie, a dark shirt, and a dark suit with a white handkerchief in his breast pocket. He has one of his smallish fedoras on his head, and his shoes are shined. Both Hodges and Webster appear in the photograph in the album booklet, and it is terrifying. It

was taken at a party in Chicago in 1955. Hodges is dressed in a tie and a sweater and a houndstooth jacket. He is holding a drink and gazing calmly to his right. Webster, at the left, looks wild and unkempt. His left arm is draped heavily around Hodges' shoulders, his tie is loose, and his shirt is open at the neck. He is looking in the same direction as Hodges, but his mouth is open, his eyes are squinted, and he looks like he is shouting and just about to push Hodges away and flatten the enemy.

The Webster who lived uneasily between these two Websters appears in de Valk's book, too. In 1971, Webster played a concert in Oslo attended by the Crown Prince of Norway. Afterward, the musicians were introduced to the Prince. Webster, whose stick legs were in poor shape, was the last to make it up to the royal box. Quoting the trumpet player Keith Smith, de Valk writes, "The other band leaders were through with their formal introductions . . . when the distinct sound of curses and groans grew uncomfortably nearer, echoing up the grand staircase. . . . Ben, having finally completed his ascent, staggered through the door. . . . The aide—almost speechless at the break in decorum—proceeded with his introductions: 'Your Royal Highness, this is Ben Webster.' The Crown Prince nodded regally, and the aide continued, 'Mr. Webster, may I present his Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Norway,' pointing Ben nervously in the right direction, at which point Ben lunged forward, slapped the Crown Prince on the back, yelling 'Ben Webster, King of the Tenors—pleased to meet you, Prince!' " ♦

From a flyer for "The Follower."

"The Follower" blends a B-movie plot with the elegant visual shorthand of pure cinema.

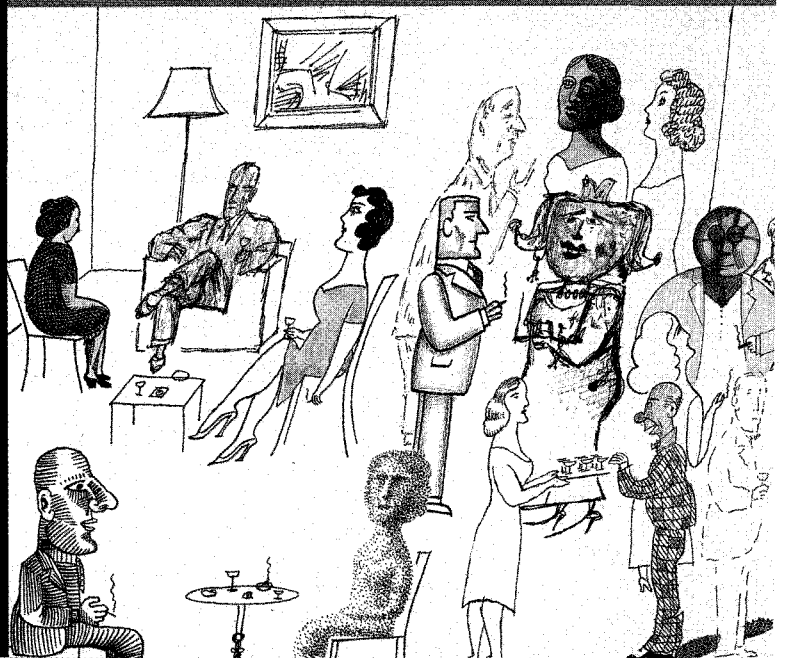
Two solitary people, a fashion model (Sandra Locke) and an art collector (C. B. Anderson) wreak havoc on each other's lives over possession of a valuable work of art.

The story is set amidst the cultural iconography of the 1960's. The soundtrack, almost entirely without dialogue, blends source music and natural sound. A mysterious and beautiful ending hints at who the survivor may be.

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RANDOM HOUSE

NEVERMORE

What Kurt Cobain did for rock and roll.

BY ROBERT CHRISTGAU

*Cobain, in 1993: an artist who didn't grow up. Photograph by Anton Corbijn.*

The recorded legacy of Nirvana is ungodly small—three studio albums, the first of which cost six hundred and six dollars and seventeen cents to make, plus one miscellany and two posthumously released live CDs. Given the exploitations that might well have ensued after Kurt Cobain killed himself in April of 1994, we should be grateful that the band's catalogue hasn't been stuffed with one of those four-CD boxes of redundant concert tapes which now diminish Jimi Hendrix, the Monkees, and the Doors. This exercise of discretion has been good for the band's image, and for our fond memories. There the six titles are on the shelf. Each sounds different from the others, and each sounds at least as vital today as it did when Nirvana

was a historical force rather than a historical anomaly. Taken as a unit, Nirvana's albums are living proof of the subtlety and variety of what conventional musicology still regards as a crude, undeveloped genre.

Although the three members of Nirvana—Cobain, Krist Novoselic, and Dave Grohl—looked like hippie-manqué undesirables, their cultural identification was punk, and in 1991, fifteen years after the Sex Pistols turned the British music business upside down, they stormed American pop with it. But they worked hard and long before that. In a compelling new biography of Cobain, "Heavier Than Heaven" (Hyperion; \$24.95), Charles R. Cross dates the band's first gig to a March, 1987, houseparty in Ray-

mond, Washington, a nowhere logging town thirty minutes south of Aberdeen, the nowhere logging home town of the then twenty-year-old Cobain. That's four and a half years before Nirvana broke through, with its second album, the cunningly produced major-label debut "Nevermind." It's also eighty-seven pages into the three-hundred-and-fifty-two-page text, which reaches its midpoint before "Nevermind" is released. While this structure inevitably short-changes the achievement of Nirvana itself, it's a crucial source of the book's considerable power. Cross asserts his compulsion to ask "questions concerning spirituality, the role of madness in artistic genius, the ravages of drug abuse on a soul"; the drug details are especially wrenching. But what emerges far more emphatically is the life story of someone who never grew up, someone whose maturation was half done before he was twenty-one, someone who extracted art from a perpetual adolescence that was over much too soon.

Many American kids have it worse than Kurt Cobain, and quite a few survive just fine. His family was never fully middle-class, never deep poor. He was well loved until his parents divorced, when he was nine, and he wasn't so badly treated after that; his mother was self-involved, his father uncommunicative and somewhat authoritarian, but neither was anything like abusive. When Cobain was seven, he was briefly diagnosed as hyperactive, and underwent a three-month course of Ritalin which he claimed set up his later drug use. He was gifted in the visual arts, where he was encouraged by a paternal grandmother whose hobby was carving Norman Rockwell images on the caps of mushrooms with toothpicks, and in music, where his model was his mother's guitar-strumming kid sister.

Unfortunately, he had other familial models as well: two paternal great-uncles and a maternal great-grandfather killed themselves. Cobain boasted to classmates that he had "suicide genes"; at the very least, something in his constitution predisposed him to take his misfortunes hard. Once a popular boy, he had become a full-fledged stoner by his freshman year in high school, and he never graduated. Lazy, petulant, and depressed, he fought with both parents,

living away from home intermittently. When he was seventeen, his mother kicked him out of her house after interrupting him in the process of losing his virginity.

Cross underpins his story with assiduous interviewing—the partygoers at that first Raymond gig, for instance, are good for a riotous short chapter. He also gained access to Cobain's drawings, journals, and numerous unsent letters. One conclusion of his research is that Cobain didn't just dream of becoming a rock star—a hypothesis that the schismatics who squabble over Nirvana's heritage still argue about—but that he worked at it, too. A guitar teacher recalls that Cobain studied longer and more seriously than he wanted to admit to an audience he'd introduced to punk's just-do-it ethos, and among Cobain's writings are texts of imaginary interviews, which include lines that showed up in real ones.

The work Cross put into augmenting the already plentiful evidence of Cobain's attraction to stardom almost certainly served his own prejudices; in addition to editing the Seattle music paper *The Rocket* from 1986—well before the local independent-label culture from which Nirvana was to emerge gained notable profile or clout—until it folded, in 2000, Cross worked with the widely circulated Bruce Springsteen fanzine *Backstreets*. Unlike the indie-rock ideologues Cobain so admired, Cross doesn't believe that rock's aesthetic value stands in inverse proportion to its mass appeal. Neither do I, but his argument might have been sharpened if he'd spent more time with the opposition: people like Calvin Johnson, the doyen of indie rock in Olympia, Washington, where Cobain moved to live with his first serious girlfriend; Tobi Vail, the riot-grrrl theorist who became Cobain's second girlfriend; Steve Albini, who produced "Nevermind"'s followup, the raw, cold, edgy "In Utero"; and Bruce Pavitt and Jonathan Poneman, the owners of Nirvana's first label, the Seattle-based Sub Pop.

Jump-started by the contagious alienation anthem "Smells Like Teen Spirit," the 1991 "Nevermind" went on to sell more than ten million copies, and transformed Cobain into the first

class-crossing rock idol of substance since Springsteen discovered barbells. Sloppy, malnourished, lank-haired, a self-proclaimed "negative creep" with beautiful eyes and a vocal attack that stylized adolescent angst as cannily as Billie Holiday's stylized the sophisticated kind, Cobain stands apart from the long line of rock's outsider heroes. He had little of the self-regard of Mick Jagger, Alice Cooper, Johnny Rotten, Michael Stipe, and none of the vanity or the clothes sense or the theatrical savoir-faire. Yet he wasn't a symbolic Everyman in the manner of Springsteen, John Fogerty, or Garth Brooks, either. He seemed like every born loser who ever failed gym—a geek you could get wasted with, a shy guy whose cuteness cried out for mothering, an arty weirdo with a common touch. So for two or three years, until his suicide registered as an act of abandonment, he gave a generation of losers a hero who felt like a loser himself, even in success—as opposed to a hero whose triumph they could only admire, emulate, envy. And thus he turned the barely self-sustaining concatenation of tendencies called "indie" into a hot genre called "alternative." Finally, some dreamed, ordinary fans would outgrow their craving for star power. And, if not that, maybe idiosyncratic cottage industrialists like Sonic Youth (who helped hook up Nirvana's major-label deal) and the Meat Puppets (belatedly introduced to the outside world on Nirvana's 1993 "MTV Unplugged") would get the hearing, and the audience, they deserved.

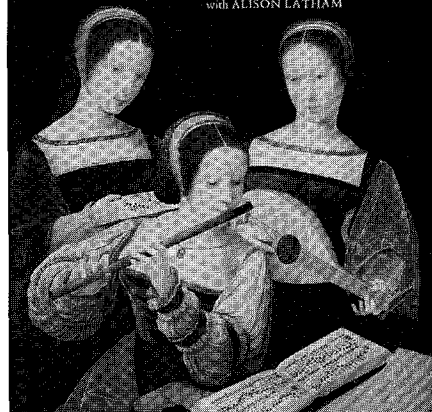
Cobain's ability to galvanize the young was the economic motor of the alt-rock bubble. The teen appeal of Sonic Youth (arty New Yorkers who imbued bizarre tunings and deadpan singing with pop pleasure) and the Meat Puppets (spaced-out Arizonans whose uncanny tunecraft won them a major-label deal well before Nirvana broke) was considerably narrower. By the same token, both bands were capable of reaching old punks, even old hippies who didn't get all gooey over Crosby, Stills & Nash. And here's the best part—Nirvana reached them, too. Ten years after "Nevermind" was released, to merely acknowledge its power as a generational artifact is to stick it on a shelf and forget about it. It wasn't just

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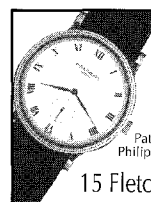
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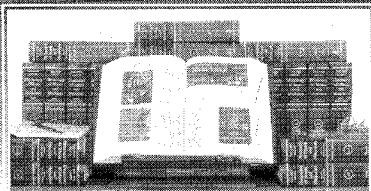
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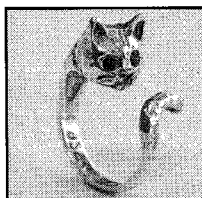
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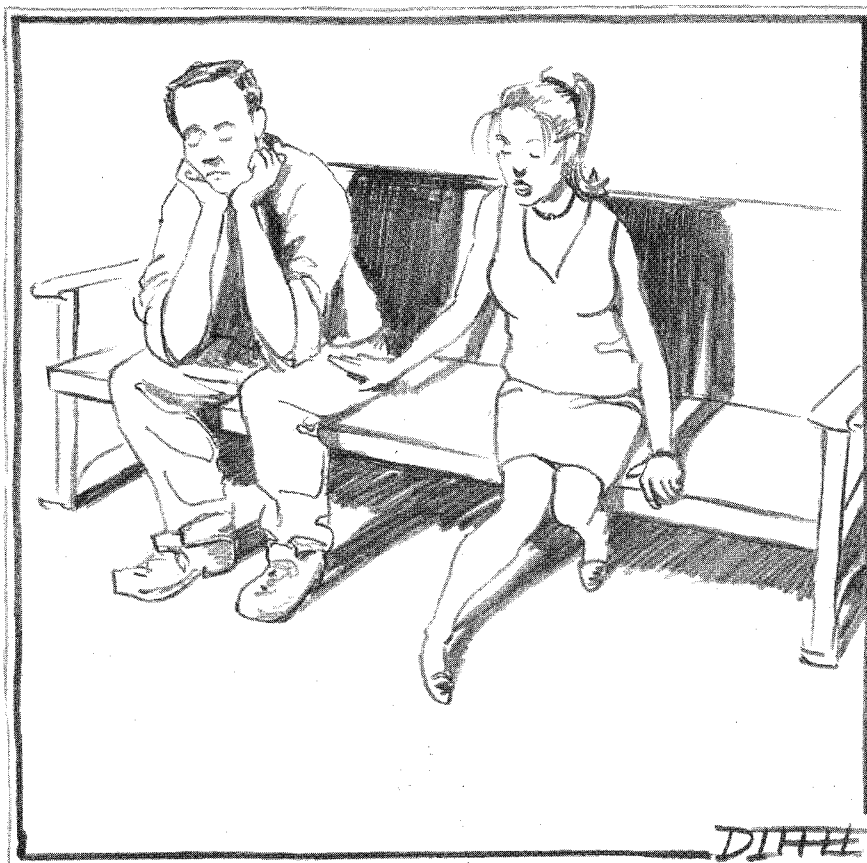
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teen-agers who loved Nirvana—it was everyone who cared about rock and roll. The band's moment is long gone. Its music isn't.

Of course the mystique remains, and of course new teen-agers discern something ineffably simpatico in Cobain's voice. But music is what has moved millions of copies of "Nevermind" since Cobain died, and what Cross inadvertently shortchanges. Familiar now with Cobain's extraordinary gift, we can hear it loud and clear on the 1989 debut album, "Bleach." Cobain's gigantic, goofy, bass-playing buddy Krist Novoselic added drollery to the band's chaotic irreverence. But only with the entrance, in 1990, of the robust, songful, head-bustingly hyperactive drummer Dave Grohl did Nirvana turn into a great band.

The conscious nakedness of Cobain's singing was key; in the studio, he pushed and shaped his white-boy burr to extremes rarely sustainable for more than a few vocals per day. Yet he never sang more movingly than on the mellow, one-take "MTV Unplugged," and the sharp cracks and forlorn howls on the care-

fully constructed live recording "From the Muddy Banks of the Wishkah" (1996) broaden our access to a sufferer who regularly veered beyond the outer reaches of self-control. Moreover, everything else on the records mitigates the pain of the voice—not just the melodies, which stick in the ear with a consistency that few bands have equalled, but Cobain's guitar, riff-based no matter how furiously it tested the riffs' limits, and the lyrics he pulled together from years of notebook poetry, which even when morbid or opaque almost always break into tenderness, wit, illumination. Novoselic provides solidity, certainty, and comfort, while Grohl revs and flails with an irrepressibility that repolarizes any negative charge Cobain has left pending. Throughout, punk minimalism redeems arena excess in a delicately shaded show of sonic force. Cobain was set on suicide, especially toward the end; as Cross points out, five of the six cover songs he chose for "MTV Unplugged" intimate death. But his music conquered such impulses as surely as sonata-allegro procedure leads the hero home—conquered them courageously, explicitly, and with



"It's not you—it's me and my new boyfriend."

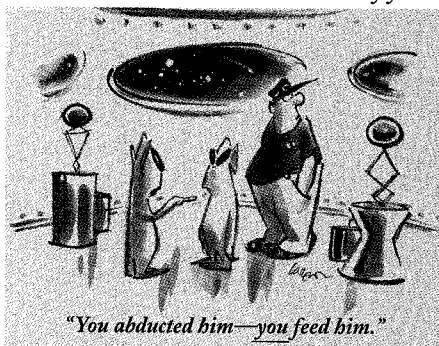
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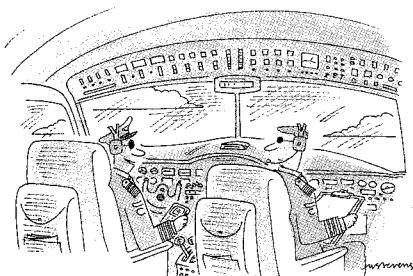
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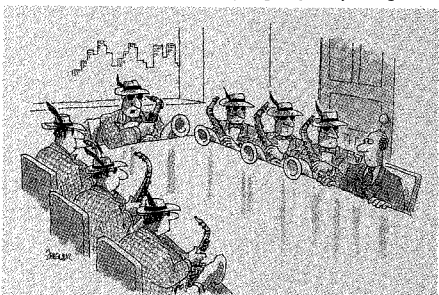
"I've done the numbers, and I will marry you."



"You abducted him—you feed him."



"This is so cool! I'm flying this thing completely on my Palm pilot!"



"Damn it, Hopkins, didn't you get yesterday's memo?"



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the unmistakable message that existential struggle was at least as real for a hippie-manqué from nowhere as for Woody Allen and Jean-Paul Sartre.

Cobain's music conquered, and he didn't. The last half of "Heavier Than Heaven" is the agonizing story of how he got the fulfillment he wanted and hated it more than the frustration he'd known. Cross dates Cobain's acute heroin addiction (as well as many of the best songs on "Nevermind") to his breakup with Tobi Vail, in late 1990, when a character named "heroine" began appearing in his journal. In the next year and a half, he achieved fame and fortune and married the love of his life—Courtney Love, of the quasi-riot-grrrl, Los Angeles-based band Hole, a dream mate for one of the rare rock stars whose predilections were monogamous. Yet neither consummation would curb his need for chemical escape.

Some blame his abrasive, attention-grabbing wife for his drug abuse; she was so despised by some of his fans that early on there were rumors that she'd killed him. Although Love clearly cooperated with Cross, he doesn't seem to be her stooge. His accounts of the child-rearing arrangements for Frances Bean, the daughter she had with Cobain, are highly uncomplimentary, and he notes that she "indiscriminately ingested" every drug her friends brought around after Cobain's death. And because Cross is straightforward about Love's many faults he is convincing when he argues that Cobain dragged Love, whom no one would call abstemious, into using more dope than she would have on her own, and that, by the way, she contributed more to his music than he did to hers. The official version of Cobain's heroin addiction described it as off and on, spurred by chronic stomach pain. Cross establishes that this story was a coverup. Cobain was a big-time junkie for all but a few stray weeks of his season in the public eye, including almost all his time with the daughter he loved. He was a frequent near-OD before he died; if the rifle that killed him had misfired, the hit of heroin he'd just injected might well have done the job instead. By shooting himself, however, he clarified his intentions. Kurt Cobain was bound for oblivion. How lucky we are that he made six records before he got there. ♦

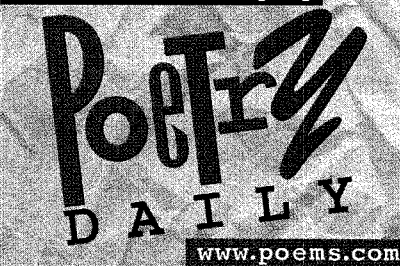
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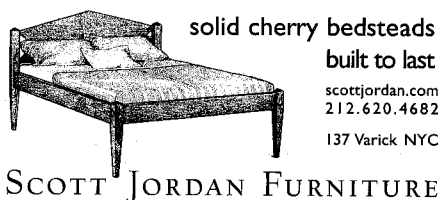
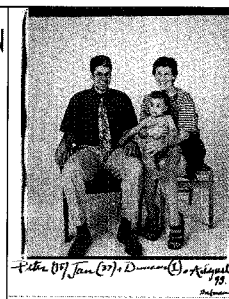


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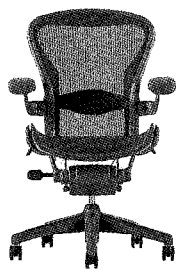


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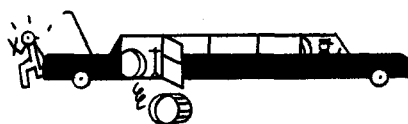
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BRIEFLY NOTED

Where Dead Voices Gather, by Nick Tosches (Little, Brown; \$24.95). This book ostensibly attempts to rescue from obscurity the blackface performer and minstrel singer Emmett Miller, who gained brief fame in the twenties and thirties, and who left behind only a handful of recordings at his death, in 1962. But this is no simple biography; Tosches acts as a wide-ranging archivist of early blues, country, and race music, not only rediscovering entire swatches of forgotten history but placing Miller's output in the context of other artists, such as Jimmie Rodgers, Hank Williams, and Bob Dylan. At times, Tosches' narrative sags slightly under the weight of his digressions and annotations, but for the most part this is a brave, compelling, and sometimes brilliant act of cultural recovery.

Rock 'Til You Drop, by John Strausbaugh (Verso; \$25). The Who sang "Hope I die before I get old" way back in 1965, and they have spent the last two decades having that sentiment thrown back in their faces. The latest critic to take aim at the aging rock establishment and its malignant effect on a once vibrant art form is John Strausbaugh, the editor of the weekly newspaper New York Press. A collection of Strausbaugh's writings, reorganized and amplified, this entertaining polemic has plenty of targets: corporate rock bands like the Rolling Stones; corporate rock magazines like, well, Rolling Stone; MTV; do-gooder rock festivals; and just about anyone or anything else who commodifies teen-age rebellion and dyspepsia for immense personal gain.

Sviatoslav Richter: Notebooks and Conversations, edited by Bruno Monsaingeon, translated from the French by Stewart Spencer (Princeton; \$29.95).



Monsaingeon's recent documentary about Richter won a large new audience for the late Russian pianist, who is frequently cited as one of the great musicians of the century, and here the filmmaker describes the difficulties of working with his reluctant, introverted subject. He also pieces together from interviews an account of Richter's life, which sheds light on his periods of debilitating depression and on the relentless discipline that enabled him to maintain a repertoire of eighty separate concert programs. What could have seemed a disjointed book is enlivened throughout by Richter's intelligence and his eccentric humor, particularly in the last section, a diary where he has made notes on the music he is listening to. There is praise for Iannis Xenakis and Marlene Dietrich—to whose funeral he sent five hundred roses—and obloquy for Vladimir Horowitz ("Such talent! And such a trivial mind"). Characteristically, his sternest criticisms are reserved for his own recordings: "It's enough for me to listen to them to put me in a bad mood."

Our Band Could Be Your Life, by Michael Azerrad (Little, Brown; \$25.95). Azerrad crisscrosses the American landscape of nineteen-eighties "underground" rock music, from Washington, D.C. (which spawned such bands as Fugazi and Minor Threat), to Washington state (Mudhoney, Beat Happening). He profiles thirteen bands that came of age before Nirvana closed the gap between alternative rock and the mainstream market, and the best stories here are the most marginal, such as the chapter on the explosive Boston band Mission of Burma. Even in his treatment of better-known bands, though, Azerrad does a fine job of demonstrating how the post-punk prime movers of the eighties echoed the original rock-and-rollers of the fifties—springing from a complacent political climate to reject the sentimental excesses of the music that preceded them.

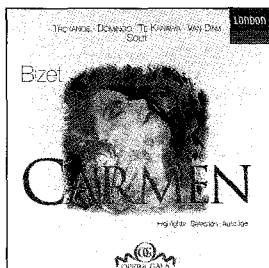
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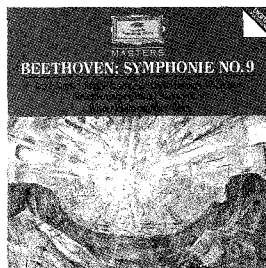
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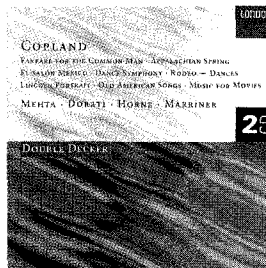
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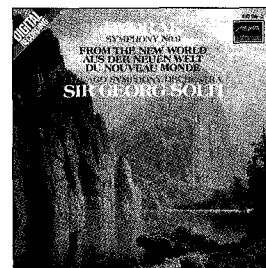
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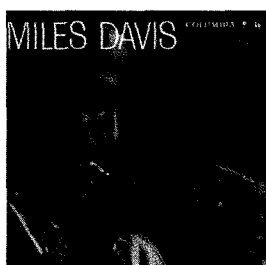
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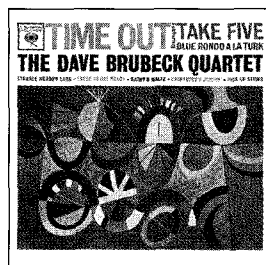
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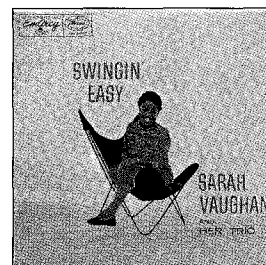
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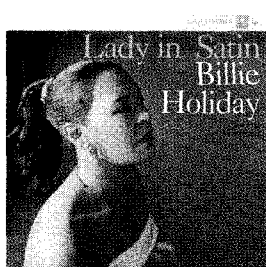
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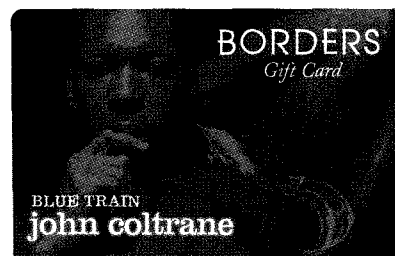
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POP QUIZ

What does the new Top Ten list mean?

BY NICK HORNBY

In 1973, for an essay published in *The New York Review of Books*, Gore Vidal read his way through the *Times* best-seller list in an attempt to understand popular taste, trashing as he passed, among others, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and the author of "Jonathan Livingston Seagull." We have long known that there is a division between literary fiction and the mass market, but it says something about the fragmentation of pop music that there is now some kind of musical equivalent. The *Billboard* charts of top-selling LPs in the month of July, 1971, included "Sticky Fingers," by the Rolling Stones; "What's Going On," by Marvin Gaye; "4 Way Street," a live double album by Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young; "Aretha Live at Fillmore West," by Aretha Franklin; and "Mud Slide Slim and the Blue Horizon," by James Taylor. You can imagine that at the time even the most curmudgeonly critics might have found it in themselves to gush over at least a couple of those. Now, however, in addition to the self-explanatory top-seller charts, we have myriad other lists, from MP3 downloads to top alternative albums to top college, whatever that may mean. (These lists may well have been born of the music critics' despair at popular taste.) There is "literary," critically approved pop—Lucinda Williams, say, or Wilco, or Nick Cave, none of whom trouble the *Billboard* statisticians much—and the MTV-driven hard rock, rap, and R. & B. that you can find at the front of your local HMV. Some might argue that the critics who wrote about Marvin and Aretha thirty years ago are the very same people who rave about Lucinda Williams today, and they'd have a point: rock critics now seem to have tenure, like senior faculty, which could explain why current youth-targeted music seems relatively unexamined.

I decided, however, that my own lack of familiarity with what people are actually buying in bulk was far too shaming,

and so I sat down and listened to the ten best-selling albums in the United States according to the July 28, 2001, issue of *Billboard*. These were, in descending order, "Songs in A Minor," by Alicia Keys; "The Saga Continues . . .," by P. Diddy & the Bad Boy Family; "Devils Night," by D12; "Break the Cycle," by Staind; "Survivor," by Destiny's Child; "Jagged Little Thrill," by Jagged Edge; "Take Off Your Pants and Jacket," by Blink 182; "Lil' Romeo," by Lil' Romeo; "Skin," by Melissa Etheridge; and "Hybrid Theory," by Linkin Park. I'd caught a couple of minutes of one of the Destiny's Child videos on TV, but, then, so has everyone who has access to a television. As far as I was aware, I had never previously been exposed to the work of Blink 182, D12, Lil' Romeo, Staind, Alicia Keys, or Linkin Park. In fact, I had to ask myself, Who are these people? What do they sound like? And what's with the numbers in the names?

The single biggest influence on most of these artists, according to the acknowledgments in their liner notes, is . . . Actually, let's see if you can guess. Who do you think is at least partially responsible for such songs as "Where the Party At," "Bootylicious," "Bad Boy for Life," "American Psycho," "The Girlies," and "Pimp Like Me"? Who do you think inspired the rapper on D12's "Ain't Nuttin' but Music" ("Independent women in the house / Show us your tits and shut your motherfucking mouth"—a chummy reference, presumably, to Destiny's Child, whose hit "Independent Women Part 1" opens their "Survivor" album)? Give up? O.K. You may well be surprised to learn that the very first person thanked in the liner notes of the CDs containing these gems is the Almighty Himself. He gets thanked on seven of the ten albums, by sixteen different contributing artists. Brian, of Jagged Edge, for instance, declares that without God "we wouldn't be here doing this third album"—incontro-

vertible, according to much creationist theory, but a somewhat reductive view of the universe nonetheless. Let's face it, without God the first two albums would have been pretty tricky, too. In a similar spirit, Michelle, of Destiny's Child, is moved to point out to the Creator, "There is no one like you!!," which is, on reflection, one of the tidiest ontological arguments you could wish to hear.

In fairness, there is very little that would cause offense on either Destiny's Child's "Survivor" or Jagged Edge's "Jagged Little Thrill." (The hopeless pun on Alanis Morissette's 1995 album "Jagged Little Pill" seems to be an homage to Alanis's ability to sell CDs rather than to her penchant for agonized self-exploration; "Jagged Little Thrill" is not an introspective collection.) There is plenty of cleavage on display on the front of the former, and a lot of tattoos and motorbikes visible on the cover of the latter, but these girls and boys are good-bad, not evil, as the Shangri-Las once put it, and although He might be baffled about what He had to do with any of it, He is unlikely, I think, to get wrathful. This is sweet-natured and competent contemporary R. & B., and though it is almost perversely unmemorable—how hard can it be to write one tune that sticks?—and utterly derivative (think girl-power pop soul in the style of the Spice Girls and TLC), you are unlikely to feel the need to call an exorcist if you find copies of either lying around in a teen-ager's bedroom.

Similarly harmless are the albums by Lil' Romeo and Alicia Keys. Only you will know whether you want to listen to an album by an eleven-year-old rapper. "It's teenage music, but it's also adult appealing," the biography on Lil' Romeo's Web site claims, but this seems extravagantly hopeful, because it's hard to imagine that anyone in his teens would swallow this stuff, and it certainly didn't appeal to this particular adult. The intro features a version of "Frère Jacques"; track two is effectively a rap version of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star"; and "Somebody's in Love" contains the line "Be my Mickey Mouse, and I'll be your Minnie." The twelfth track, incidentally, "When I Get Grown," was written by Lil' Romeo, Master P, P.K. a.k.a. Marcus Carter, Gip Noble, Cecil Womack, Linda Womack, Ahmad Lewis, and Stefan Gordy; one or

two of these, one suspects, weren't at the very top of their game.

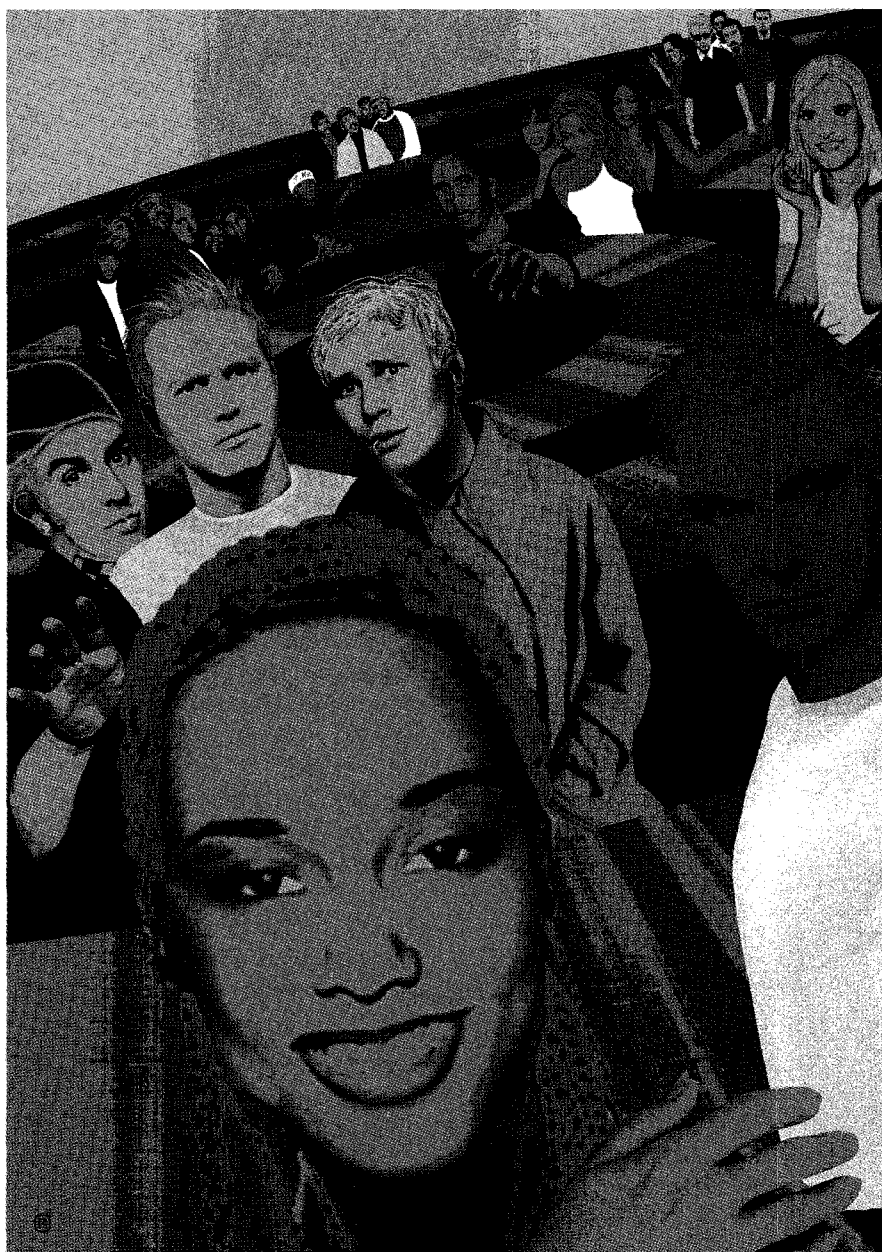
The Alicia Keys disk really isn't bad, however, and is certainly the only album in the Top Ten that I might contemplate playing again one day in the not too distant future, when the memory of this whole *Billboard* experience is a little less . . . vivid. "Songs in A Minor," like a lot of diva R. & B., is overproduced and overpolite, and the songs rely too heavily on the groove and on Keys's melisma, rather than on their own structure, but it has its moments—most notably the bluesy, moody "Fallin'," which borrows liberally from James Brown's "It's a Man's Man's Man's World," and her cover of a Prince song, "How Come You Don't Call Me." Indeed, one of the strengths of the album is Keys's recognition that there was black American music before Whitney Houston. The string arrangements echo Curtis Mayfield, and the occasional willingness to lean on piano and voice suggests that Keys might have come across Roberta Flack and Aretha Franklin.

Politesse comes to seem like the most important and attractive of virtues when you enter the midnight worlds of P. Diddy and D12. P. Diddy's "The Saga Continues . . ." and D12's "Devils Night"—like the Staind and Blink 182 albums—come equipped with parental-advisory stickers, and these warnings, let me tell you, mean business. Anyone who has lived through Deep Purple, the Sex Pistols, the Ramones, the Cramps, Grandmaster Flash, and Nirvana could be forgiven for thinking that there is nothing out there with the potential to alienate in the way that our music antagonized our parents. We have become accustomed to sonic ferocity (and it was that, as much as anything, that terrified a generation raised on Frank Sinatra and Pat Boone) and to songs that contain every conceivable obscenity, covert and overt endorsement of drug use, and sexually explicit language. Despite all this, an hour in the company of P. Diddy (formerly Puff Daddy, or Puffy, or Sean Combs) is a dismal, sordid experience. We have been told often enough that to disapprove of gangsta rap is pointless, middle class, and smug, like disapproving of modern urban life itself. Nevertheless, one is entitled to feel queasy about the enthusiasm for and endorsement of the gangsta life audible on "The Saga Con-

tinues . . ." The eponymous first track (the title, as it happens, of the first track on the Jagged Edge album, a coincidence indicative of the general level of self-mythologizing going on at the top of the charts) could, it seems to me, be summarized as follows: some rich, powerful, violent people have been away for a while (who these people are, and where they have been, remains a moot point, particularly since we know enough not to confuse the artist with his narrators), and if, in their absence, you have been trying to muscle in on their turf, then they will not be happy about it. "Y'all niggaz still talkin'? Oh you got a little name little fame little fortune? What you have is a portion / Bout the size of the hats in the

back of my Porsche and / So you better use caution." These rich, powerful, violent people seem to be on speaking terms with people who own firearms; beyond that it is perhaps best not to speculate.

The star of the rap collective D12 is Eminem, who, as some readers may be aware, has caused a stir in the last couple of years, mostly by directing a Tourette's-like and apparently inexhaustible torrent of bile toward his fellow-entertainers, his partner, and members of his family. The D12 album "Devils Night" offers no respite, needless to say; listening to the fourth track here—a "skit" entitled "Bizarre," in which one of the gang members' attempts to seduce a colleague's girlfriend goes awry, because he farts all the



There's hard rock, rap, R. & B., and plenty to irritate the heard-it-all-before liberals.

way through it—was, I think, the single most dispiriting moment of my professional life so far this millennium.

This, of course, is more or less the entire point, and it gives pause. When one is confronted by “The Saga Continues . . .” or “Devils Night,” any complacency one might have felt about pop music’s no longer having the capacity to alienate or irritate heard-it-all-before liberals evaporates. By comparison, the Sex Pistols’ nihilism seems thoughtful and politically engaged. (It came as something of a shock to realize that the music I have been listening to over the past few years is exclusively and disgustingly sensitive. Even my favorite recent hip-hop song, OutKast’s “Ms. Jackson,” contains the line “I apologize a trillion times”—a sentiment that would make Eminem gag.) Just about everyone, from the scariest metal singer to the dimmest dance act, wants the world to be a better place, but not Eminem, who veers more toward unmediated hostility and threats of violence, rampant consumerist bragging, casual misogyny, and puerility. “What’s going on in the world today? People fighting feuding looting, it’s O.K. / Let it go let it flow let the good times roll,” goes the chorus of D12’s “Ain’t Nuttin’ but Music.” (The music on “Devils Night,” incidentally, is frequently superb—tense and springy, with a wit and energy that blows P. Diddy’s stale, pompous beats away.) The echo of Marvin Gaye is gleefully and knowingly perverse. Eminem must realize that Gaye wanted an answer to the question, and, to the rapper’s way of thinking, that kind of political angst is contemptible.

We should have seen this coming. Ever since Elvis, it has been pop music’s job to challenge the mores of the older generation; our mistake was to imagine ourselves hipper and more tolerant than our parents. The liberal values of those who grew up in the sixties and seventies constitute an Achilles’ heel: we’re not big on guns, consumerist bragging, or misogyny (where are the people who objected to Bruce Springsteen’s use of the phrase “little girl” when you need them?), and that is the ground on which Eminem and his crew choose to fight. I know when I’m beaten; I can only offer sporting congratulations and a firm handshake.

Blink 182 makes chirpy pop-punk

music in the tradition of Green Day and the Dickies, and they have received their parental-advisory sticker for services to grotesque schoolboy humor. (A previous album was entitled “Enema of the State.”) Most of the songs on “Take Off Your Pants and Jacket” deal straightforwardly and unimaginatively with first dates (“First Date”) or youthful alienation (“If we’re fucked up, you’re to blame,” and so on); every now and again, presumably to dispel the air of Monkees wholesomeness, they stick their fingers down their throat and vomit all over their lyric sheet. The chorus of “Happy Holidays, You Bastard” is as follows: “Unless your dad will suck me off / I’ll never talk to you again / Unless your mom’ll touch my cock / I’ll never talk to you again / Ejaculate into a sock / I’ll never talk to you again.” Why? I don’t know why. My copy of the album came with four exclusive bonus tracks, one of which is called “Fuck a Dog,” but maybe I was just lucky.

It is with some relief, then, that one turns to Staind—not because of the music (Staind is a metal band, and can think of no higher calling than to soup up old Black Sabbath riffs) but because at least you know where the group stands. “Most of you don’t give a shit / That your daughters are porno stars / And your sons sell death to kids,” they sing on the very first track. Those of you whose daughters are kindergarten teachers and whose sons sell literary novels in independent bookstores should not take offense. Staind tends to look on the gloomy side, but at least its members care, and their howls of anguish are clearly connecting to the right crowd. One satisfied customer at Amazon.com writes, “I’ve had a rough time dealing with abuse, peer pressure, love, rape, hate and self-mutilation” (and although her despair is affecting, is it permissible to wonder whether the self-mutilation at least was somehow avoidable?), before praising the band for providing consolation. Who are we to doubt her? Linkin Park, which performs a similar function to similar acclaim (“One of the best albums of all time by far,” an-

other enthusiastic Amazon customer says of its new album, “Hybrid Theory”—with a bold disregard for the usual mealy-mouthed critical timidity), is a rap-metal band not dissimilar to Limp Bizkit, or, for that matter, to Staind, or to . . . Actually, the truth of it is that neither Staind nor Linkin Park nor Limp Bizkit is dissimilar to just about any other band that has played an electric guitar very loud in the past thirty years, which means that there is very little to be said for or about them, though I wish them no ill.

The only album in the *Billboard* Top Ten made by an artist who is forty or older is the one by Melissa Etheridge, and, yes, the music sounds tired, clapped out. Part of this is deliberate—“Skin” is a breakup album, Etheridge’s “Blood on the Tracks”—but, in truth, her rock ballads, all throaty vocals and melodramatic chords, do not have the emotional power they might have had fifteen or twenty years ago, and much of the writing here is on the hackneyed side of generic: “’Cause you live and you learn / And you learn to hold on / And time will make it heal / And time will make it gone.” It is all obviously the product of personal pain, but this path is rutted with ancient tracks, and, sure enough, Etheridge finds herself trundling along in them. “Skin” is unlikely to remain a best-seller for long, one fears; it’s too grownup, and it’s too predictable, and maybe in the *Billboard* universe those adjectives are now synonymous.

Sales are no longer the absolute indicator of success or popularity that they once were—this is what we must tell ourselves. The *Billboard* Top Ten means nothing! Kids download everything now! Or they burn CDs for each other! And, yet, hundreds of thousands of young Americans have wanted these albums badly enough to go to a store and spend their cash on P. Diddy and D12 and Blink 182; someone on your street might be listening to “Fuck a Dog” right now. I shall, when I have recovered my strength, creep back to my little private Top Ten, which consists of penniless artists like the Pernice Brothers and Joe Henry and Shuggie Otis and Olu Dara, who make music full of thoughtful, polite ironies and carefully articulated cynicism and references to our glorious heritage. But I won’t kid myself that it’s pop music—not anymore. ♦



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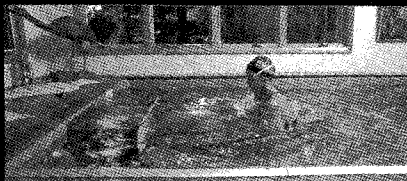
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THE THEATRE

SEA OF LOVE

"The Seagull" soars over Central Park.

BY JOHN LAHR

A duck—or was it a seagull?—flew across Belvedere Lake just as the lights came up on Mike Nichols's production of Chekhov's play at the Delacorte Theatre, in Central Park. For a split second, I thought the scene had been staged. But, later, when an egret landed by the lake in the background—a moment of wonder in perfect Chekhovian counterpoint to the woe being acted out in the foreground—it was clear that the theatre gods were working their benevolent magic on the evening and on Chekhov's still astonishing demonstration of the thrilling, terrible life-and-death instinct at play in us all.

"Chekhov's art demands a theatre of mood," said the Russian avant-garde director V. S. Meyerhold, who appeared in the first production of "The Seagull," a legendary failure whose subsequent triumph became a symbol of the Moscow Art Theatre's innovation. (A seagull was sewn into the theatre's curtain.) But to define and to achieve the correct Chekhovian mood takes some doing; Nichols delivers it with the aplomb usually associated with his name. He has convened an outstanding ensemble (they might be called the Nichols All-Stars) for Tom Stoppard's fluid adaptation, and even the open-air stage—subtly and minimally designed by Bob Crowley, who gives us a rusty swing, a samovar, and a few chairs, and goes easy on the silver birches—seems to work in the production's atmospheric favor. All is simplicity and swiftness, the elusive but proper ozone for the tragicomic realm that "The Seagull" inhabits. The play's theatrical game of hide-and-seek progresses from realism to a heightened, almost mystical, lyricism. Both in the rhythms of his scenes and in the rhythms of his language, Chekhov aspires to trap the unspoken and the unutterable. Although he was writing before Freud, his plays

essentially dramatize the unconscious. ("People sometimes walk and talk and they're fast asleep," one character says, in a telling throwaway line.) Chekhov's style is akin to what psychiatrists call "hovering." He is at once involved and detached: his language engineers immediacy; his structure engineers distance. He immerses the audience in the interplay of emotional contradiction and shifting perspective, an impressionistic sleight of hand that yields an uncanny sense of the real—"everyday life, accessible to all, and yet understood by almost no one in its cruel inner irony, life so... close to us that at times you forget you are sitting in a theatre," as an eminent Russian lawyer wrote, in Chekhov's favorite response to the play.

Too often the cumbersome machinery of naturalism weighs down Chekhov's grace, but in Central Park a sense of lightness pervades the proceedings. (Before the performance begins, we hear Nichols's voice inviting us to turn off our cell phones and to imagine Russia in 1895, and a lake "that is directly in the flight path of Smolensk Airport.") The characters' anguish, not hemmed in by a proscenium, floats up into the moonlit summer night; even the horse that young Nina rides in on is nimble and startling. The show has few external effects—that "predictable ragbag of worn-out routines," against which "The Seagull" 's would-be playwright, Konstantin, and Chekhov, too, are in rebellion—and the audience is left to work its way into the play through the internal drama.

Chekhov described "The Seagull" as "a comedy with three female parts, six male, a landscape (a view of the lake), much talk about literature, and tons of love." In other words, Chekhov, the doctor and writer, is examining *Homo sapiens* for signs of emotional and metaphysical gas. His characters see



Meryl Streep, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Christopher Walken, and Natalie Portman in Mike Nichols's version of Chekhov.

folly in other people, which is comic; they just can't see their own folly, which is tragic. Often, the best-informed minds have the most impoverished hearts. The weak-willed novelist Trigorin (defly underplayed by Kevin Kline to emphasize the character's lethal passivity), for instance, destroys on a whim the callow actress and eponymous seagull, Nina (Natalie Portman). But, of all the brokenhearted characters looking for love or finding it in "The Sea-

gull," to my mind the most complex is Konstantin (the prodigiously talented Philip Seymour Hoffman), who is desperate to win the attention of his famous actress mother, Arkadina (Meryl Streep). Although the character is a mere twenty-five, Hoffman plays him as a furtive, exhausted man-child—a combustible combination of panic and petulance. "Can you think of anything more hopeless and stupid than being me in Mama's drawing room

when she's got celebrities in?" Konstantin asks his uncle Sorin (Christopher Walken, who lives in his own dippy world of loss). Konstantin's wayward infantile feelings—his bitter and idealized love for his self-centered mother; his Oedipal rage at Trigorin (his mother's lover); his intoxicated infatuation with Nina, who performs in his play; his fierce self-hatred, alternating with omnipotent arrogance—are eloquently parsed by Hoffman. He can turn Che-

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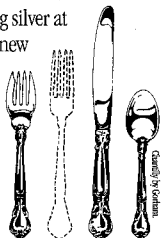
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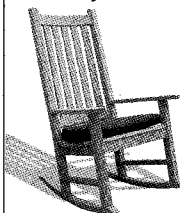
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khov's words into droll, sour music with the gentlest of emphasis: "Wonderful with the sick," he says of Arkadina's shows of compassion.

A pudgy fellow who always seems a stranger to his own body, Hoffman makes his unformed softness work for the character; it renders Konstantin's dilemma—his sad little wish to be loved—all the more poignant. As Chekhov brilliantly illustrates, Konstantin cannot make himself seen. ("Your attention, please," he says to the assembled, who are already at attention.) Arkadina's gaze is directed demonstrably inward; she is, to paraphrase Noël Coward, always watching herself go by. And even Nina cannot focus on Konstantin. "You look at me from so far away," he complains. Konstantin's tantrums, his suicide attempt, and his writings are all pleas to be taken in, to be kept literally in mind. "His stories are pictures, vivid and full of color," the clear-eyed and compassionate doctor, Dorn (the rock-solid Larry Pine), says of Konstantin. He adds, "The only trouble is, they don't go anywhere in particular." Konstantin can't penetrate the consciousness of his mother, of Nina, or, in the end, of his art. When he realizes that, even in writing, Trigorin has a mastery that eludes him ("He'll have the moon reflected in a broken bottle. . . . I've got shimmering dark, twinkling stars, fading pianos"), the last drop of hope seems to drain from his lost soul. The wide Delacorte stage allows Konstantin to dispatch himself in front of the audience, instead of off-stage, and the moment is marvellously managed, with Konstantin sunk in a half-lit armchair that faces away from the audience. A sudden explosion is swallowed up in the night air, and then a stain mottles the back of the chair. He has shot his heart out.

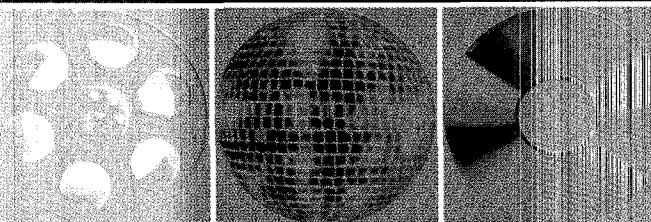
Meryl Streep's Arkadina is a vivacious and steely bundle of smug competitiveness, and her witty characterization is pitched a little broader than it would be indoors. Streep always gives good value. But here—cartwheeling, throwing hissy fits, clinging to the leg of Kevin Kline when she suspects Trigorin's sweet tooth for Nina—she has a histrionic field day that emphasizes the comedy and not the killer, which has the knock-on effect of allowing the

other characters and the play's moral debate to come into sharper focus. Arkadina's defining character trait is her stinginess. She refuses brother, son, and servants all but the smallest dribble of her reported seventy thousand rubles. (She even borrows to play lotto.) She can't give. She also can't share. She wants everything all the time, and Chekhov demonstrates the way that she manipulates the light around her, which is why her son shrinks in her shadow and why she'll do anything to keep Trigorin, whose fame reflects her power back to her. Streep and Kline have their best moments when Streep unleashes the high amperage of her sexuality and cunning to get the besotted Trigorin back under her control. "Look me in the eye—Look at me! Look! Are these eyes lying to you?" Arkadina says, blinkered to everything around her. In the middle of her full-court emotional press, to which he finally yields, Trigorin whips out his notebook to write the words "virgin territory." Trigorin may be in Arkadina's clutches, but his heart is with the gamine Nina.

In their tragic alliances and silent sufferings, all the characters in Chekhov's sea of love stay afloat by clinging to illusions. In Masha (Marcia Gay Harden), who is famously in mourning for her life, Chekhov economically sketches the vanity of despair. Masha's unrequited and impossible love for Konstantin, the only character on-stage who feels more self-loathing than she does, guarantees her unhappiness and allows her to hold on to the notion of love without having to jeopardize a heart that is incapable of feeling it. And when Nina—hungry, grief-stricken, and broken—returns, after two years in Moscow, to the lake where her destiny was sealed, she tells Konstantin, "What really counts is not dreaming about fame and glory . . . but stamina." As she speaks these words, she is on her hands and knees from exhaustion. Konstantin counters, "So you've found yourself, you know where you're going." Young and fetching, Natalie Portman delivers her lines well; she just can't quite connect to them. This smudges Chekhov's design but in no way mars the impact of his profound story, into which Nichols and his cast have breathed such gorgeous life. ♦

CELLULOID SOUNDS

BOSTON: SEPTEMBER 10, 11, 12



THE NEW YORKER GOES TO THE MOVIES FILM FESTIVAL

In a cinematic yet common mix of folk, rock, and reggae, The New Yorker's latest film festival is composed of movies where the social scene plays a starring role.

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H E D U L I

DON'T LOOK BACK (1967)

D.A. Pennebaker's classic portrait of Bob Dylan on tour in 1965 England captures the folk bard just before his ascension from prophet to icon. Features numerous performances, including "The Times They Are a Changin'" and "Mr. Tambourine Man," along with appearances by Joan Baez and Donovan.

Monday, September 10 at 5:30 PM

LET'S SPEND THE NIGHT TOGETHER (1982)

This cinematic celebration of The Rolling Stones includes twenty-five songs recorded during their record-breaking 1981 tour. Concert footage was filmed in the Brendan Byrne Arena in East Rutherford, New Jersey, and Tempe, Arizona's Sun Devil Stadium.

Monday, September 10 at 7:45 PM

ROCKERS (1978)

When a reggae musician starts his own record company to liberate his colleagues from the control of a crooked label, the results are both exciting and dangerous. Even rawer than the reggae classic "The Harder They Come," the film features songs by Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer, and Burning Spear.

Tuesday, September 11 at 5:30 PM

WATTSTAX (1973)

Isaac Hayes, The Staple Singers, Rufus Thomas, and others commemorate the five-year anniversary of the Watts riots with a performance in Los Angeles. This documentary mixes concert footage with social commentary on the black community and comedy from a young Richard Pryor.

Tuesday, September 11 at 7:45 PM

STOP MAKING SENSE (1984)

In this masterful concert film, Jonathan Demme captures the kinetic magic, eccentricity, and oversize suits evocative of The Talking Heads' storied three-day gig at Hollywood's Pantages Theatre in late 1983.

Wednesday, September 12 at 5:30 PM

PURPLE RAIN (1984)

This electrifying film debut chronicles the story of The Kid, a struggling Minneapolis musician. Prince's Oscar-winning soundtrack reveals, among other things, exactly what it sounds like when doves cry, and Morris Day and the Time sparkle in their supporting roles.

Wednesday, September 12 at 7:45 PM

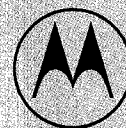
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THE CURRENT CINEMA

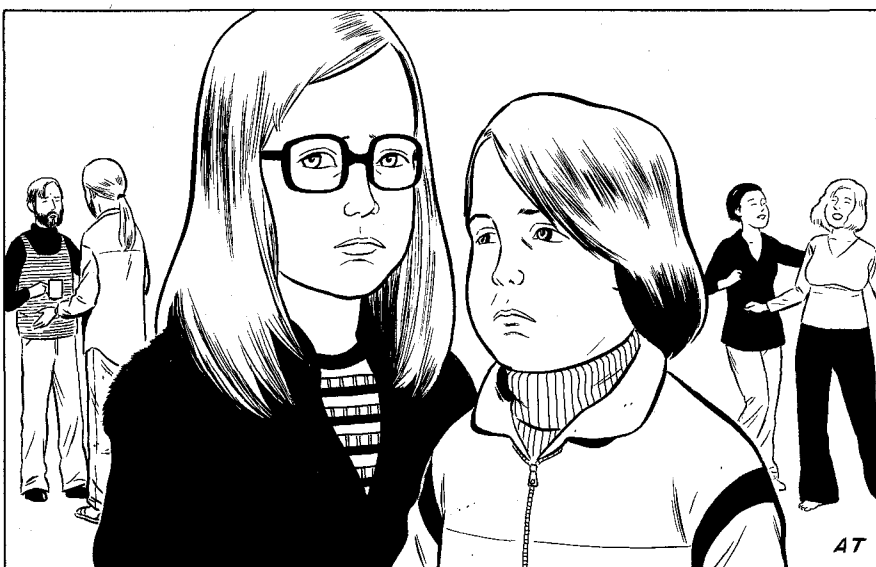
SWEDEN SWINGS

Utopia, seventies style.

BY ANTHONY LANE

Just when I was starting to despair of ever finding a decent movie about life in a Swedish hippie colony in the mid-nineteen-seventies, along comes a perfect example. Lukas Moodysson's "Together," which opens in New York on August 24th, is the hopelessly endearing tale of a household in the chilly suburbs of Stockholm, crammed with endearing

a fourteen-year-old boy, who assumes the taut, stunned expression of someone who has been given the biggest toy in the store but no instruction manual. "I think I'm in love," he declares. Later, she tries to kiss him, and he immediately retracts his declaration: "I'm not in love with Lena anymore." Breasts are one thing, but kissing, well, yecch.



Emma Samuelsson and Sam Kessel as commune kids in "Together."

types who are themselves, you will be relieved to learn, completely hopeless. Take Göran (Gustav Hammarsten), a sort of Thor Heyerdahl without the spirit of adventure: rusty of beard, long of face, and so gentle of demeanor that you could run him over and he would apologize for getting in the way of your Volvo. He has a girlfriend, Lena (Anja Lundqvist), but this is a commune, and thus, unfortunately for Göran, she is at liberty to be everyone else's girlfriend as well. At one point, craving company of any description, she bares her bosom to

This is one of many splendid inversions in "Together," which, taking its cue from the insubordination of the hippie movement—the principle that enjoins all members to moon the earthbound rituals of the bourgeoisie—itself refuses to play by the rules. When Göran's sister Elisabeth (Lisa Lindgren), a plump blonde with a cut lip, seeks refuge in the community for herself and her two children, our contempt is aimed squarely at the husband who struck her—Rolf (Michael Nyqvist), a boozier left kneeling in his own fumes on the floor of their

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apartment. Rolf resembles the wolfish Vladimir Putin with an added pelt of stubble: beat that for unlovely. So who could predict, from these grim beginnings, that Rolf, far from being left behind, would gradually claw his way back not only onto the grid of the narrative but, more implausibly still, into our wary affections? And which, of the many women in the story, would you mark down as the final target of Anna (Jessica Liedberg), the smiling in-house lesbian? I like her basic pickup line: "Have you ever tried meditating?" That's one word for it.

Moodysson is no stranger to same-sex attraction; his debut feature, "Show Me Love," managed the near-impossible task of dramatizing a crush between two Swedish schoolgirls without getting itself steamed up—without, in fact, showing any love being made at all. I remember rising to leave the movie theatre and seeing an elderly gentleman in a hat and coat, who had obviously turned up expecting great things and was now sitting there dumbstruck with disappointment. In fact, "Show Me Love" was a great thing, in its sonata-like economy, and Moodysson has now rescored its companionable scruffiness for a small orchestra of characters. What "Together" shares with the best low-budget movies of the past year, such as "Memento" and "Under the Sand," is a startling ability to hit the ground running; within ten minutes of the opening credit, we know exactly who all the commune's inhabitants are and what their problems are likely to be. We know Lasse (Ola Norell), Anna's estranged husband, who still lives there, with his devil's grin and his angelic son, Tet (named, needless to say, after the Offensive). We know the pair of hard-core, humorless utopians who will eventually quit the house and move "to Mother Earth," presumably asking directions along the route. We know Erik (Olle Sarri), the son of a banker and a devotee of the "Communist Marxist Leninist Revolutionary League," who agrees to fornicate with Lena on condition that they can talk about the iniquity of the profit motive immediately afterward. And we know Klas (Shanti Roney), who says that he would "love to be a housewife," and whose urgent quest for a man to share his bed is unduly hampered by his eerie, preëptive re-

semblance to Garth of "Wayne's World." Party on, Klas.

Then, there are the children. If you want an unsentimental view of what an infected marriage can do to those conceived within it, try this film. Elisabeth's thirteen-year-old daughter, Eva (Emma Samuelsson), accompanied by her squashy-faced little brother, Stefan (Sam Kessel), seems too bruised to heal the wounds of others; she goes and sits outside in the hippie van, listening to Abba on her chunky portable tape deck through—and this is my idea of true period detail—one of those wiry white earpieces that we used to plug into the side of our heads. It's as if the title of the film (which is also the name of the colony) represented not a benign fact but a stubborn ambition—as if harmony of any kind had to be fought for in the face of competing solitudes. The best scene in the picture, the one that almost fells you with distress, shows young Stefan going to visit Rolf, who is living numbly on his own. The boy rings the bell, and his father, sprawled in booze, jumps to attention; he yanks on a shirt, sweeps up the empty bottles, and eventually makes it to the door. Too late: Stefan has already given up and gone. In happy homes, kids tidy up their mess before their dads come in the room; here it's the other way around, and it heralds a growing sense that kids of this era—of any era, maybe—were wise to life with a straightforwardness that their elders (you could hardly call them betters) could not dare to match. The irony bites even deeper, for it was precisely a desire to recapture the bliss of infancy, a moral and social stainlessness, that drove so many adults to drop out. And here are the kids themselves: impure as mud, watching TV, playing with toy pistols, and marching around the kitchen table bearing banners with the slogan "We Want Meat." If "Together" has a message for the disenfranchised of the third millennium, it is this: man cannot live by chickpea alone.

The result, strange to say, is not a wacky movie. It is a flawless study of wackhood, right down to Göran's magnificent speech on the symbolic beauty of oatmeal and the flower painted on the telephone receiver, but the film itself could not be more clearheaded, and Moodysson has erased all traces of spiritual fug; he carefully closes the oat-

meal scene with the distinctive slap—*schlumpf*—of porridge hitting plate. On the other hand, he is anything but a clinician; he is not on some smirking reactionary mission to slice these people up. Instead, by a sleight of hand that, even after a couple of viewings, I cannot begin to solve, he exposes the inner workings of the hippies' folly and still manages, as though unable to repress a natural charity, to convince us that they are, without exception, respectable souls. At some level, he agrees with their dreams, while reserving the right to find them hilarious, and that makes "Together" a comedy—not as much of a comedy for Anglophones, perhaps, as it was for the audience of Swedes with whom I first saw it, and who hooted permanently at the trickle of in-jokes, but a comedy nonetheless. All those zoom shots, pulsing in and out on Moodysson's hapless creations, are not just a clever tribute to the favored technical fad of the seventies; they are a means of restating the claim, made most eloquently by Robert Altman in "Nashville" and much obscured by the cinema of the intervening decades, that it is both our solemn privilege to imagine ourselves as being center stage and our comic destiny to be lost in space, stranded in the wings, on a nose-freezing night in Stockholm.

The ending of Moodysson's film is heavenly—an impromptu soccer game in the snow—yet the players have reached that goal, you feel, only after a hard training in pain. This is a winter's tale wrapped in crappy knitwear, and fleshed with casual nudity, and told to the sound of unforgettable songs that you would prefer to forget. I am normally allergic to heartwarming movies, but this one applies the heat with such tactical skill that none but the most iced-over cynics will wish to resist; both in the reach of its tolerance and in its re-creation of an epoch when the will to tolerate was most nakedly put to the test, this is, I would guess, the movie that "Almost Famous" longed to be. As Göran discovers, there has never been any such thing as free love; on the contrary, the purpose of "Together" is to demonstrate that love costs, or, rather, as Nazareth crisply informs us on the soundtrack, love hurts. On the evidence of this picture, however, and if you're prepared to swing a little, it's worth the effort. ♦

THE SECOND HUNDRED DAYS: THE QUIZ

1. True or false: When George W. Bush was asked what Independence Day meant to him, he replied, "Well, it's an unimaginable honor to be the President during the Fourth of July of this country. It means what these words say, for starters. The great inalienable rights of our country. We're blessed with such values in America. And I—it's—I'm a proud man to be the nation based upon such wonderful values. . . . But the true greatness of America are the people."

2. Who defended the Bush Administration's advocacy of nuclear power by saying, "If you set aside Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, the safety record of nuclear is really very good"?

- (a) E.P.A. Administrator Christine Todd Whitman.
- (b) Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill.
- (c) Chief of Staff Andrew Card.
- (d) Interior Secretary Gale Norton.

3. Who is Mia Lawrence?

(a) The Vermont social-studies teacher who was honored as National Teacher of the Year at a White House ceremony, which Senator James Jeffords was pointedly not invited to.

(b) One of the Yale faculty members who protested the university's decision to present George W. Bush with an honorary doctor-of-laws degree.

(c) The Austin bar manager who told the police that Jenna Bush was trying to buy a margarita with a fake I.D.

(d) One of three mooning protesters in Sweden upon whose exposed bottoms was spelled out "We Hate Bush."

4. Which headline did not appear in an American newspaper?

- (a) "BUSH IS CHOOSING INDUSTRY INSIDERS TO FILL SEVERAL ENVIRONMENTAL POSTS"
- (b) "WHITE HOUSE WANTS TO BURY PACT BANNING TESTS OF NUCLEAR ARMS"

(c) "BUSH TO DELAY PLAN FOR CLEAN WATERWAYS"

(d) "U.S. WARNS IT MAY SKIP CONFERENCE ON RACISM"

(e) "U.S. REJECTS BIOLOGICAL ARMS BAN PROTOCOL"

(f) "TREASURY IS PLANNING TO BORROW TO COVER COST OF TAX REBATES"

(g) "178 NATIONS REACH A CLIMATE ACCORD; U.S. ONLY LOOKS ON"

(h) "PUSHING HIS MISSILE PLAN IN SPAIN, BUSH CALLS ARMS TREATY A 'RELIC'"

(i) "ASHCROFT SET TO LIMIT U.S. HOLDING OF GUN DATA"

(j) "BUSH'S APPROVAL RATING SLIPS TO 50%, A 5-YEAR PRESIDENTIAL LOW"

(k) "BUSH ACKNOWLEDGES HE HAS TO WORK HARDER, KNOW MORE"

5. What nickname did George W. Bush come up with for the Dalai Lama?

- (a) Exile Man.
- (b) Dolly Parton.
- (c) Tony Lama.
- (d) No nickname leaked out.

6. What did George W. Bush say when a Philadelphia writer shook his hand at a Fourth of July block party and said, "Mr. President, I hope you only serve four years. I'm very disappointed in your work so far"?

- (a) "I sincerely hope to change your mind about that."
- (b) "Let me disappoint you a little more. I'm going to steal the next election, too."
- (c) "What a set of *cojones* on you!"
- (d) "Who cares what you think?"

Match the observation about George W. Bush with the observer.

- 7. "He's a terrible ignoramus."
- 8. "He has selected nominees from the Taliban wing of American politics."
- 9. "He doesn't know how much he doesn't know and is in no rush to find out."

10. "I have been disappointed in almost everything he has done."

11. "It seemed to me that his mental reasoning is very deep, very profound."

12. "He is determined to squander the unique opportunity the Presidency provides—the opportunity to call us to a cause greater than a three-hundred-dollar rebate."

- (a) N.A.A.C.P. chairman Julian Bond.
- (b) *Times* columnist Frank Rich.
- (c) Los Angeles *Times* columnist Arianna Huffington.
- (d) Actor Robert Redford.
- (e) Former President Jimmy Carter.
- (f) Russian President Vladimir Putin.

13. Which of the following observations was not made by George W. Bush?

- (a) "It's negative to think about blowing each other up. That's not a positive thought. That's a Cold War thought. That's a thought when people were enemies with each other."
- (b) "An equal society begins with an equally excellent schools."
- (c) "Fathers have a unique and irreplaceable role in the lives of children."
- (d) "Africa is a nation that suffers from incredible disease."
- (e) "The amazing thing about this job, though, is the job seems to follow you around."
- (f) "Karl Rove has all the ethical finesse—not to mention the belly and jowls—of Ed Meese."

14. True or false: When a child in London asked him what the White House was like, George W. Bush responded with an impromptu ten-minute description of some of the historical rooms.

- (14) False; he replied, "It is white."
- (7) d. (8) a. (9) b. (10) c. (11) f. (12) c. (13) f. (1) True; (2) b. (3) c. (4) b. (5) d. (6) d.

Answers

THERE WAS A DAY IN AMERICAN HISTORY WHEN BLACK PEOPLE COUNTED LESS THAN WHITE PEOPLE. NOVEMBER 7TH, 2000.

Last election day Jermaine Terry went to the polls to do his duty as an American citizen.

Yet when he arrived, he was told that his name had been taken off the voter list. There was no real reason he should have been denied his right to vote. But there was something that made it more likely: Jermaine Terry is black.

And he is just one of hundreds of thousands of black citizens across the country whose votes were never counted that day.

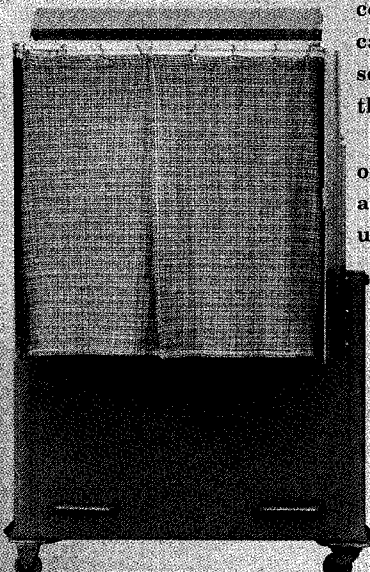
These Americans encountered a litany of abuses, not the least of which was the now infamous Votomatic punch card voting system. According to The New York Times, these machines registered no vote for president five times as often as the more costly optical scanners. And the punch cards were much more prevalent in predominantly minority districts, such as Cook County, Illinois, where 120,000 votes went uncounted.

Such districts also faced massive understaffing and inadequately equipped polling offices. As a result, many voters

with language barriers as well as those whose registrations were processed improperly were denied a part in our political process.

In the state of Florida, for example, where provisional voting does not exist, voters whose valid registration wasn't available at the precinct had to have their status confirmed on the spot. In predominantly minority districts, where there was less access to computers, poll workers had to telephone the central election office. But because the lines were constantly busy, many of the calls never got through. And scores of Americans never got the chance to vote.

Unfortunately, this is only part of a story that is nothing short of a national embarrassment. Visit us at www.aclu.org/votingrights to learn more, and to help us in our non-partisan fight to ensure that our most fundamental right, the right to vote, is granted to everyone equally. Because how can we say that every vote counts if every vote isn't counted? Please support the ACLU.

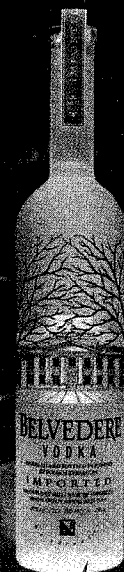


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